

# **Horizon**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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**RUSSIAN HOLIDAY**

*by* EDWARD NEIL

**ELDORADO BANAL**

*by* MARTIN TURNELL

**FRAGMENT  
OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—IV**

*by* AUGUSTUS JOHN

**JOAN MIRO**

*by* PETER WATSON

**HELLS, HITLER, AND THE WORLD STATE**

*by* GEORGE ORWELL

POEMS *by* STEPHEN SPENDER, VERNON WATKINS

VIEWS *by* EDWIN MUIR, BONAMY DOBRÉE AND NEVILL COGHILL

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MONTHLY: ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE NET

AUGUST VOL. IV, No. 20 1941

***Edited by Cyril Connolly***

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announces its new series of poetry pamphlets

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# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

*Vol. IV No. 20 August 1941*

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMMENT	78
TOD UND DAS MÄDCHEN	<i>Stephen Spender</i> 84
DISCOVERIES	<i>Vernon Watkins</i> 85
THE MOTHER AND CHILD	<i>Vernon Watkins</i> 86
RUSSIAN HOLIDAY	<i>Edward Neil</i> 87
ELDORADO BANAL	<i>Martin Turnell</i> 97
FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—IV	<i>Augustus John</i> 121
JOAN MIRO	<i>Peter Watson</i> 131
WELLS, HITLER, AND THE WORLD STATE	<i>George Orwell</i> 133
SELECTED NOTICES:	
MR. AUDEN'S NEW YEAR LETTER	<i>Edwin Muir</i> 139
WAR INTO EUROPE	<i>Bonamy Dobrée</i> 143
RECENT POEMS	<i>Nevill Coghill</i> 145
REPRODUCTIONS: A drawing by Augustus John, facing page 130, four paintings by Joan Miro, between pages 132 and 133. There is a Message from Moscow facing page 80.	

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enemy of the Diffusionists, he is the enemy of the plagiarising Christian Church, whom he attacks in places with Gibbonian intensity. He is the defender of the West against the death-wishful emasculating religions of the East, and, after steeping himself in Oriental beliefs (whose poetry and mystical appeal administered in a much smaller dose have been fatal to several contemporary writers), he proclaims his faith, not in Yoga, stars, spiritualism, non-attachment or non-resistance, but in the ancient Roman (and Victorian Scotch) conception of patriotism and duty.

‘Greek and Roman society was built on the conception of the subordination of the individual to the community, of the citizen to the state; it set the safety of the commonwealth, as the supreme aim of conduct, above the safety of the individual whether in this world or in a world to come. Trained from infancy in this unselfish ideal, the citizens devoted their lives to the public service and were ready to lay them down for the common good; or if they shrank from the sacrifice, it never occurred to them that they acted otherwise than basely in preferring their personal existence to the interests of their country. All this was changed by the spread of Oriental religions which inculcated the communion of the soul with God, and its eternal salvation as the only objects worth living for, objects in comparison with which the prosperity and even the existence of the state sank into insignificance. The inevitable result of this selfish and universal doctrine was to withdraw the devotee more and more from the public service, to concentrate his thoughts on his own spiritual emotions, and to breed in him a contempt for the present life which he regarded merely as a probation for a better and an eternal . . . The ties of the state and the family were loosened: the structure of society tended to resolve itself into its individual elements and thereby to relapse into barbarism; for civilisation is only possible through the active co-operation of the citizens and their willingness to subordinate their private interests to the common good. Men refused to defend their country and even to continue their kind. In their anxiety to save their own souls and the souls of others, they were content to leave the material world, which they identified with the principle of evil, to perish round them. This obsession lasted for a thousand years. The revival of Roman law, of the Aristotelean philosophy, of ancient art and literature at the close of the Middle Ages, marked the return of Europe to native

## ***A Message from Moscow***

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CYRIL CONNOLLY, STEPHEN SPENDER, HORIZON

Thank you for friendly greetings to Soviet writers. We are happy to establish with English and American intellectuals deep mutual understanding and mutual aim laying principles of justice, goodwill—indispensable grounds for future growth humanitarian culture in world.

We Soviet writers, as our Red Army and all united fraternal consolidated peoples Soviet Union, are full of optimism. Fight is stubborn, difficult, and enemy like wounded monster exerting all its strength, but power and resistance of our Army grows each day, while strength Hitler's Army each day wanes. Especially difficult for Germans last week's battle. On important directions front we destroyed five divisions—separate columns of three hundred tanks completely destroyed to last machine—also several separate large infantry and tank formations. Offensive violence enemy diminishing. Among German war prisoners more and more often we come across youths or elderly soldiers badly dressed and exhausted who are unfamiliar with automatic guns. Our guerrilla fighters paralyse transport of German munitions and petrol, more and more frequently Germans bury their tanks in the earth, using them as forts. German infantry trained only to carry out lightning war, compelled change methods to war manœuvres, which it poorly understands, and is quickly falling into a state of panic. Frequently our troops discover Germans chained to machine-gun or tankists whom German officers have locked in buried tanks.

Such facts bring serious reflections. For example, advancing German infantry drives before it on our line of fire captured women children refugees. German army hides behind women's skirts and children's bodies—only an army struck with deadly inner disintegration could stoop to such ignominy.

In name of Soviet literature please give friendly and fraternal greetings to writers of England and America—to all who dedicate their lives to the annihilation of bloody and vicious fascism on our beautiful earth. On us all depends that this black night more quickly passes.

ALEXEI TOLSTOY





ideals of life and conduct, to saner, manlier views of the world. The long halt in the march of civilisation was over. The tide of Oriental invasion had turned at last. It is ebbing still.'

Had Sir James realized what was to take its place, and how the cult of the State was to develop, he would not have enjoyed his triumph, and there is evidence that at the end of his life—that long, happy, simple, one-track life devoted to the scientific pursuit of truth through one of those historic collaborations of which the human couple is still capable, he regretted that he had not occupied himself more with the problems of the world, and used his influence in combating the newest and crudest religion at work in it. But this is of small importance to his readers, for, like Freud, he is one of those who change the fundamental attitude of those who read him; they are never quite the same, they can never be superficially scornful of folk-lore or religions, indifferent to the seasons, or contemptuous of the savage—sometimes his disciples produce flowers of understanding like Logan Pearsall-Smith's *Vicar of Lynch*; sometimes they do no more than look differently at men reaping, since they knew that it would have not been unusual, a short time ago, for the reapers to seize the onlooker and cut his throat over the corn. Both Freud and Frazer go deeper than Marx, for the springs which move the individual are more profound than the economic laws which govern society. The disciple of Sir James Frazer will always tend to find the Mystery of the Wheatsheaf more absorbing than the price of bread, even though not till bread is free will he be justified.

Reading *The Golden Bough* brings home the utter emptiness, in regard to magic and myth, of the life of urban economic man. Religious art is at a standstill, it would be better to convert our bombed churches into moss-grown ruins and leave them to stand like Greek temples than to look for the architects to rebuild and restore them, while the images sold by ecclesiastic furnishers are beyond belief. The life of the city dwellers has long lost all contact with the seasons, and the city has invaded the country and destroyed what it has found. Even in Sir James Frazer's time he could write of Devonshire rustics 'crying the neck' and so perpetrating, in their cries of 'Wee Yen Way Yen', which could be heard four miles away and 'resembled a Turkish Muezzin', the Linus lament, the Oriental wailing for the death of the corn

spirit, whose wheaten neck is that of Adonis himself. No such rites have yet arisen round the Filling Station, though we may still live to see our window-boxes transformed by natural piety into Gardens of Adonis, where quick-flowering plants spring up in three days, after which they fade, and the gardens are carried down and floated away on the river.

Nevertheless the search for a Myth goes on, because poets and painters are aware of their need for some symbolic language, some shorthand of belief, some set of images which can be freely used in æsthetic association, as were those figures of Greek mythology which became universal art language for the educated, and which enjoy a new lease of life since their appropriation by the School of Freud. This search, arising out of *The Golden Bough*, leads us to one of the few mythological poems of our time (T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*) and to the even more remarkable book behind it. This is Miss Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge, 1920), which, alas, is almost unprocurable. According to Eliot, *The Waste Land* is largely a poetical adaptation of Miss Weston's account of the Grail Legend correlated to the present day (1922), and with some references to Frazer's *Attis: Adonis: Osiris* added.

*From Ritual to Romance* is a daring interpretation of the Grail Legend in terms of the Asiatic religions. According to Miss Weston's analysis the dominating factor is the illness of the Fisher King, who, though rich and in his prime, is suffering from a kind of premature impotence, either through a wound or a mysterious failing. His illness has caused a permanent drought, and it is the object of the young Quester to find the Grail, whereupon, on touching the Cup with his Lance or by some similar ceremony, the Fisher King will be healed (*revenu en sa jeunesse*), and the rain fall on the Waste Land again. In his search for the Grail the Quester passes through a painful ordeal in the ruined Chapel Perilous. Eliot, in his poem, concentrates more on the Waste Land, which he identifies with post-war Central Europe, than on the illness of the Fisher King; indeed he makes Phlebas and Tiresias more important as characters. The Fisher King has only two direct mentions. Yet as one reads Miss Weston's book he becomes a more living symbol even than twenty years ago, for he seems the personification of Chamberlain's England, its wealth, its sterility, its mysterious illness, which causes the whole fabulous

capitalist world to dry up: 'Le Roi Pecheors de qui est grant dolors, quar il est cheüz en une douleureuse languor'. It would not be fair to give a résumé of Miss Weston's book, for in reading it one is transported into a whirl of argument and magic that is incommunicable, and where the clouds that hang over the dark ages reveal only glimpses of what may be legendary figures, Gawains and Parsifals, and what may be survivals of the mystery religions brought to Roman garrison towns, to Carlisle and Caerleon-on-Usk, and preserved in the Welsh mountains till someone called Bledericus or Bledri ap Cadivor, a Welsh Quisling who sided with the Norman French, told them his stories, and sent out from remote Pembrokeshire the legend of the cup and the lance, the mystic rejuvenating vessel which was to dazzle medieval Europe. Now that David Jones is at work on some Grail pictures we may hope to see these extraordinary legends reappear in art, for they possess everything, being both pagan and Christian. The Fisher King may be a primitive semi-divine ruler, or Montagu Norman; the Quester may be a Communist, a fighter pilot, or a Californian Messiah. Miss Weston concludes that 'of this one thing we may be sure, the Grail is a living force, it will never die; it may indeed sink out of sight and, for centuries even, disappear from the field of literature, but it will rise to the surface again, and become once more a theme of vital inspiration.' To bring this about the first thing to be done is to reprint her enthralling book. The rest must be left to the young Welsh painters and poets who will, no doubt, extract more from the legends of their compatriot (*famosus ille fabulator*) than did Tennyson and Wagner. Like the Tarot pack, however the symbols are applied their truth remains, for we all live in the Waste Land where the spirit is drying up, and each of us is a Fisher King, ignorantly ruling over our private kingdom, where our radishes have no roots and our lettuces no leaves, and hoping that some Quester will find the answer which will put everything right, as when 'Le Rois pèschéor estoit mués de sa nature et estoit garis de sa maladie et estoit sains comme poissons'.



STEPHEN SPENDER

# TOD UND DAS MÄDCHEN

FROM a tree choked by ivy, rotted  
By liver-shaped fungus on the bark,  
Out of a topmost branch  
A single sprig is seen  
That shoots against the sky its mark,  
As though the dying trunk could launch  
The whole life of the sap  
Into one wedge-shaped steadfast glance  
Above the lapping shining circling evergreen.

So with you,  
Where you are lying,  
The strong ship of your limbs dragged back  
By green tides of regret  
And the golden sorrowful flesh  
Scorched on by disease,  
How difficult is dying  
In your living dying eyes!

How tediously the clock kills  
When your fading breath  
Launches one usual word  
Above the stretched body of death.  
A trickling water fills  
The sad well of your body  
With gradual drops of dying  
—Yet more love than I ever knew  
Still sails upon your eyes.

Oh how, when you have died,  
Shall I remember to forget,  
And with knives to separate  
Your death from my life—  
Since, darling, there is never a night

But the restored prime of your youth,  
Peaceful, does not float  
Upon my sleep as on a boat,  
With the glance of love that lives  
Inescapably as truth.

## VERNON WATKINS

# DISCOVERIES

The poles are flying where the two eyes set:  
America has not found Columbus yet.

Ptolemy's planets, playing fast and loose,  
Foretell the wisdom of Copernicus.

Dante calls *Primum Mobile*, the First Cause :  
'Love that moves the world and the other stars.'

Great Galileo, twisted by the rack,  
Groans the bright sun from heaven, then breathes it back.

Blake, on the world alighting, holds the skies,  
And all the stars shine down through human eyes.

Donne sees those stars, yet will not let them lie:  
'We're tapers, too, and at our own cost die.'

The shroud-lamp catches. Lips are smiling there.  
'*Les flammes—déjà?*'—The world dies, or Voltaire.

Swift, a cold mourner at his burial-rite,  
Burns to the world's heart like a meteorite.

Beethoven deaf, in deafness hearing all,  
Unwinds all music from sound's funeral.

Three prophets fall, the litter of one night :  
Blind Milton gazes in fixed deeps of light.

Beggar of those Minute Particulars,  
Yeats lights again the turmoil of the stars.

Motionless motion! Come, Tiresias,  
The eternal flies, what's passing cannot pass.

'Solace in flight,' old Heraclitus cries;  
Light changing to Von Hügel's butterflies.

Rilke bears all, thinks like a tree, believes,  
Sinks in the hand that bears the falling leaves.

The stars! The signs! Great Angelo hurls them back.  
His whirling ceiling draws the zodiac.

The pulse of Keats testing the axiom;  
The second music when the sound is dumb.

The Christian Paradox, bringing its great reward  
By loss; the moment known to Kierkegaard.

VERNON WATKINS

## THE MOTHER AND CHILD

LET hands be about him white, O his mother's first,  
Who caught him, fallen from light through nine months' haste  
Of darkness, hid in the worshipping womb, the chaste  
Thought of the creature with its certain thirst.  
Looking up to her eyes declined that make her fair  
He kicks and strikes for joy, reaching for those dumb springs.  
He climbs her, sinks, and his mouth under darkness clings  
To the night-surrounded milk in the fire of her hair.  
She drops her arm, and, feeling the fruit of his lips,  
Tends him cunningly. O what secrets are set  
In the tomb of each breath, where a world of light in eclipse  
Of a darkly worshipping world exults in the joy she gave  
Knowing that miracle, miracle to beget,  
Springs like a star to her milk, is not for the grave.



EDWARD NEIL

## RUSSIAN HOLIDAY

IT is six years since I went to Russia. Some of the material details of my visit are blurred; I still retain the most vivid impressions of persons and atmospheres that I have enjoyed anywhere—a particular flash of a smile, gestures, white silk blouses, snatches of music, shaven heads, argument and crowd-moods that were ordinary enough in themselves but are printed deeply in the back of my mind, like symbols remembered from a childhood dream.

I had for some years been a Communist, of a desultory emotional-intellectual sort—imperfectly disciplined, often a month or two late in getting my Party card stamped up. So I had the advantage of not expecting the Soviet Union to be a Utopia, and was saved from the disappointment that some 'Leftist' writers have expressed so savagely. I took a line midway between these ingenuous extremists and those who seemed to go to Russia in search of damaging evidence rather than of truth. (Sir Walter Citrine, for instance, was obsessed by a shortage of bath-plugs.)

Mine was a holiday visit. I had been working hard, and felt that I might be able to refresh myself in this new civilization without filling too many notebooks with economic and industrial statistics. I remember having some difficulty in impressing on the earnest Russians at the Intourist office in Aldwych (through which one had to apply for one's visa) that I really desired to avoid rather than to share the benefits of the programme of instructive escorted outings that they promised all tourists. In another respect the Intourist handbook was reassuring. 'Evening dress is definitely not needed,' it said. ' . . . for your peace of mind do not make yourself conspicuous in plus-fours or similar unusual attire.'

On the plane I met an old friend, a Jew, also going to Moscow; we took a gloomy pleasure in roaming Nazi Berlin, the two of us—Jew and Communist—protected by the imperial request and—require of whoever was Foreign Secretary when we got our passports.

Now, as I say, I went to Russia determined not to be let down by any initial over-enthusiasm on my own part. I was sure that I

should find much that was incomplete and irritating and inefficient. I had learned only a phrase or two of Russian, such as 'Please, comrade,' and 'Thank you, comrade' (which, after all, cover a good many situations in life). But it was impossible for the half-trained Communist in me not to glow when our Deruluft plane first landed on Soviet soil, and we saw the Red flag flying above the outlandish little shack of an airport; and close-cropped men in shaggy thick clothing, with caps, shuffled their way awkwardly into the plane *as passengers*. In each country, I thought, the ruling class makes use of the best means of transport. This is where workers and peasants travel by air. . . .

I was particularly inclined to romanticize the first Russians I saw because the only book I had been reading on the way was *Anna Karenina*—an exciting book to read for the first time when you are flying to Russia for the first time. Besides this, my suitcase held various articles which cynical dilettanti of travel had advised me to take—Keating's powder, for instance, and Bromo. (The Keating's I never had to use once, and felt ashamed of on my return, when the Customs man at Croydon started prodding the unopened tin. The Bromo was useful: every square inch of Soviet paper was needed for higher cultural purposes, about 150 million people having suddenly become literate.)

We arrived at Moscow in the evening. The Customs were polite, patient, and thorough. Some investigation of documents was clearly included; at one moment I feared that each sheet of my Bromo was going to be examined separately. I regretted being unable to explain in Russian that it was not MS. paper; but refrained from trying to illustrate its real use in the language of signs.

I didn't much like the hotels in Moscow—either my own stuffy palm-and-marble one or the more grandiose one which had been the scene of historic meetings in October 1917. (A much larger, plainer, better-equipped hotel, with a bathroom to every bedroom, was then being built.) These tourist hotels seemed—indeed, were—entirely cut off from the Russian people's everyday life. They were bourgeois enclaves. Only twice did I succeed in persuading ordinary Russian workers to come in for a drink; they were as ill at ease as a London worker is in the Savoy or the Ritz.

Fortunately, several of my own English bourgeois friends were

also in Moscow at this time. Some of them had been to a Persian art congress in Leningrad. One was doing a series of articles for *The Times* (which, I was interested to note, he was able to send home in the diplomatic bag). Their presence helped to make these musty, plushy hotels tolerable. We ate together, enjoying the excellent food—caviar, sturgeon, game were especially plentiful—lamenting the tortoise slowness of the waiters. These were mostly decrepit, sour, and deaf, hangovers from the old régime—employed on the comprehensible theory that they should know how to cope with the gastronomic eccentricities of rich bourgeois, and because young Soviet citizens preferred factory-work to this sycophantic job and had to be protected, anyway, from contamination by possibly undesirable aliens.

At night when we had dined, always very late, we used sometimes to go round to an underground night club in Gorky Street. This was much gayer; I feel that the Webbs would have disapproved of it, and no doubt it was attacked in *Pravda* and eventually condemned. For here one used to find not only bourgeois tourists and foreign diplomats but Red Army commanders drinking and dancing with that complete Russian abandonment to exhilaration that the Diaghilev Ballet used to echo faintly. The place was called the Medjvedj—the Bear. Those little glass carafes on each table held not water but vodka; on a great sword-like skewer a smoking shashlik would be brandished to your plate. The strange twangling music, the gaudy decorations were Caucasian; and every hour or so till dawn a tough and graceful Georgian boy named Batyrbeg would dance wild dagger dances with dervish punctilio.

By day, after some tussles with the Intourist officials at my hotel (bureaucrats of the strictest type, they were horrified to see me escape each morning from the clutch of tourists awaiting guides and charabancs in the lounge<sup>1</sup>), I used to wander about

<sup>1</sup> It is fair to them to add that I was, by dodging these conducted tours, which accounted for part of the prepaid inclusive rate of about £1 a day, not getting my 'money's-worth'; it is fair to the Soviet authorities to add that some of the more tiresome of these officials were shortly after this sacked; it is fair to myself to add that I am not entirely frivolous. My friends in England often find me priggishly solemn and socially-conscious. But I was prepared to take the model prisons, crèches, factories and farms for granted. Many specialists had testified to their excellence. We would obviously be shown the best. I wanted, so far as I could, to contact the man in the street.



Moscow as freely as I have wandered about Edinburgh, Palermo, Jerusalem, and other agreeable cities. I bought a phrase-book (the very name of whose publishers, Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, made it seem hopeless to tackle Russian seriously in the short time I had there), and spent many enjoyable hours pointing to 'I don't speak Russian' (till I learned to say it) and 'Please come with me to the Park of Culture and Rest'. (Alas, the phrase-book was English-Russian only, not Russian-English; so these conversations were one-sided.) The Park was like a bit of old Blackpool in Hyde Park, with tracks and stadia for athletes as well. Hundreds of Comsomols (young Communists) were always queueing up for the parachute-jumping tower—a breath-taking, semi-serious gadget which I saw later at fairs in Brussels and New York.

Of culture<sup>1</sup> in the narrower sense there was plenty. I paid several visits to the Museum of Modern Western Art, which has what must I think be the largest collection of Picassos in the world. A sugar millionaire's private collection was the nucleus of this museum; most of the pictures were pre-1917. Peasant delegates from the country, up for some conference, would trudge painstakingly round, scrutinizing the pictures, studying the long interpretative notes displayed below them; these would often express disapproval of a modern picture as a manifestation of bourgeois decadence, while granting it technical brilliance. 'Socialist realism' was the slogan which crystallized the approved style in art. Abstract experiments were condemned as Leftist: 'the real historic development of Soviet art,' wrote an authority, 'proceeded on the principle of critical assimilation of the art of past centuries'.

Similarly, another authority wrote: 'The methods of "functional architecture" could satisfy the requirements of Soviet society only during the first period of construction. . . .' Later, towards the end of the first five-year-plan period, the rising standard of living brought demands for 'artistic quality' in new buildings. The 'fetishism of technique' was officially rejected in favour of a critical re-formation of the classic styles.

<sup>1</sup> 'The divorce of "culture" from the life of ordinary people springs from the fact that "culture" has come to be thought of as something separate from or opposed to that body of practical knowledge which is appropriate to understanding the modern world.'—T. C. Worsley in *The End of the 'Old School Tie'* (Secker & Warburg). He writes of Britain; this could not be said of the U.S.S.R.

The first results of this new policy, as I saw them in Moscow, seemed to me deplorable. The new American Embassy, for instance, was covered incongruously with hideous Corinthian pilasters. I was told privately—but could not check—that one cause of the reaction against functionalism had been the impermanence of some Corbusier-type buildings. They had been built hurriedly; there was either shoddy work or sabotage; they started cracking up quickly. Then too, with increased prosperity, there was a tendency to copy the more lavish superficialities of Western culture: 'the best is good enough for us'. No doubt by now some Soviet architects have achieved what they were looking for—'an organic unity of technical function and artistic form'. Even then I saw some new theatres—e.g. at Rostov-on-Don—sanatoria, and workers' clubs which were satisfactory from either point of view.

In London I can hardly ever drag myself to a theatre. The dreadful drawing-room comedy: the curtain rises on the butler setting out the cocktails, skirmishing with the maid. The screaming farce: in and out of the cardboard bedrooms, in and out of the comically loud trousers. The lady playwright's homey analysis of suburban complexes: the wise but formidable matriarch, the tender aunt, the restless daughter. . . . Which makes you the sickest?

In Moscow it isn't just 'propaganda' to say that I found the theatre really exciting. I remember best two shows—one traditionally done, by the Moscow Art Theatre, one experimental. The latter was 'Aristocrats' (since done in English by Unity Theatre, London). It was performed on a figure-of-8-shaped stage in the midst of the audience, who joined in now and then. A friend who sat with me explained what was happening; even without understanding the words I was fascinated by the characterization and the spirited tempo of the production. The other show was Dickensian: a Russian operatic version of 'Pickwick', done in a mood of rather Playfairish whimsy; but solider and swifter. It was extraordinary and amusing to hear recognizably Cockney characters, dressed as Victorian Englishmen, talking and singing Russian. The audience, like all the Moscow audiences I was in, were crowded and responsive.

There was a considerable Dickens vogue. Enormous editions of translations of his works were being printed. In the bookshop

windows I also saw translations of Cecil Aldin's dog books. What I preferred—and bought—were some of the Russian illustrated children's books. I still have these; they have delighted many English children. One shows animals—rabbits, elephants, an angry bear, a kitten—learning to use the telephone. One shows a naughty boy who won't wash, and the punishment that befalls him. The furniture comes to Disneyesque life: nailbrushes and sponges take wings and belabour him, washstands and jugs spit a scornful inundation on him.

It is often said that the Russian people 'aren't allowed' to know anything of life in other countries. But they are allowed, and encouraged, to read the books of other countries—not only Marxist books, either. From our classics, as well as from recent literature, I think they may have picked up a fair idea of what the English people are like.

Certainly they were aware of the classical literature of other nations. About this time Dimitrov (whose portrait 30 ft. high—as large as Stalin's beside it—stared down from a building near my hotel) had been talking to the Soviet Writers' Association about Cervantes: 'In the hands of the revolutionary bourgeoisie "Don Quixote" was a powerful instrument in the struggle against feudalism. . . . The revolutionary proletariat knows the need of a Cervantes—even a little Cervantes would do—able to give us a weapon like that!' (Laughter and applause.)

But the most notable of all Soviet contributions to art has been, perhaps, in the cinema. Many Londoners still remember, thirstily, such stupendous films as 'The General Line,' 'Mother,' 'Storm Over Asia,' and 'Ten Days That Shook the World'. This was the new civilization at its most virile and profound. I met Eisenstein, leading Soviet film-director. He drove me up to his studios. He had a car for his own use: it had been voted to him by his trade organization. What a worker of any kind needed or deserved in the way of such personal possessions seemed usually to be provided for him. Intellectuals and technicians were particularly well off. A popular novelist had 'dried up', partly on account of illness; he had not produced a new book for several years. He was still being maintained by the State, and had been sent repeatedly for free courses of treatment and convalescence to sanatoria on the Black Sea riviera. Another film-director had accumulated large 'royalties' on one successful film: he was able to buy various



small extra luxuries—‘but of course,’ it was explained to me, ‘it’s really no use to him to have all that money; he can’t misuse it as he could in a capitalist country; he can’t build a factory with it, and exploit labour, and live on the profits. . . .’

Among the less happy foreign intellectuals in Moscow were a few homosexuals. The Soviet Government, abandoning the ‘liberal’ attitude to this problem which remained officially enshrined in the Soviet Encyclopædia, had imposed drastic penalties; as in heterosexual relationships, what was especially condemned was any taint of prostitution or exploitation of a junior by a citizen in a responsible position. One tortured American technician begged me to induce Shaw and other English writers to write to Maxim Gorky asking him to influence Stalin towards a more tolerant treatment of homosexuals. I went to see Shaw on my return: he was not in the least interested, dickered brilliantly round the subject for half-an-hour, and said he was sure the Soviet authorities must have had strong reasons for taking this action. Meanwhile, many of the leading male ballet dancers of Moscow had been sent off to prison camp (where they were allowed to continue their artistic activities); so that it was commonly said that you had to go to that prison camp to see the best ballet.

It was about this time, too, that the reaction against the ‘free-love’ idea of some of the early Bolsheviks was at its strongest. (Lenin himself did not share their anarchistic view of personal relationships.) Both divorce and abortion were made slightly more difficult to obtain than they had been; the unsettling effect on Party work (the paramount consideration) of constant amorous adventures was realized. There was, in fact, a pragmatic tendency towards the Christian theory of marriage—that it should be monogamous, fertile, permanent.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has notably refused to endorse the attitude towards Soviet participation in the war adopted by some English Roman Catholics: they hope, avowedly, that the war may result in a ‘Christian revolution’ in Russia, and the overthrowing of the ‘godless tyranny’ of the Kremlin—a hope which equates itself closely with Nazi war-aims. The Archbishop, carefully and specifically, wishes success to the Soviet Government (and, of course, ‘a new resurgence of the interests of religion’). A reconciliation between the Archbishop and the Dean

of Canterbury would be one of the minor and pleasanter fantasies of this war. The Dean has always urged that, essentially, Soviet civilization is more Christian than our own: there, alone in the world, is there a practical, deliberate attempt to make brotherly love the basis of the national economy, the motive of all work.

Even in 1935 there was far less in Russia to shock the English Christian than you would have supposed from anti-Soviet (and largely Rome-inspired) propaganda. I went to one of the 'anti-religious' museums, vaguely expecting Tussauesque horrors. Instead, one might have been in the Victoria and Albert, or a museum of anthropology: there were handsome carved idols from West Africa, and well-displayed, well-cared-for collections of Christian vestments and plate. There was nothing to compete, in vulgarity or luridness, with any extreme Protestant account of the Inquisition.

I attended one service in Moscow, at a big Orthodox church in the suburbs. The congregation was large, and mostly elderly, of the breast-beating, runny-eyed, matted-beard type—though there were also a few young Red Army men and peasant girls, who crossed themselves constantly in the slow, spacious, intent Orthodox way, kissed icons, and seemed to have no fear of being victimized by lurking OGPU agents. The choir was as mellow, fruity, resonant, and rhythmical as in all Orthodox churches. Crouching by the door of the church were a few old sore-scratching, stump-advertising mumblers—the only beggars I saw in the whole of my visit to Russia.

It was when I had left Moscow, with its tourists and foreign technicians and anti-Soviet correspondents and fatigued diplomats, that I really began to enjoy Russia. I now found few who could speak English; I had to rely on my phrase-book and on the frank eye-to-eye smile that will often convince even those who cannot understand your dumbness that you mean them no harm. I flew south by civil air-line, having escaped by a preternatural effort from the Intourist governesses; the plane was a six-seater, not very new or fast; the pilot was young—about nineteen or twenty—with a closely-cropped bullet-head, excellent teeth, a round, high-cheekboned face, and ingenuous serious eyes that would crinkle engagingly in sudden laughter. He was an able and careful aviator. There was little pretence of getting the plane there

on schedule; the passengers' safety was more important. At each stop the weather reports from further on were closely pondered; if even slight clouds seemed to be looming, we would wait, for hours if need be, till they dispersed.

I left the plane at a Caucasian mountain resort, formerly Vladikafkas, renamed, in honour of a Soviet leader, Ordjonikidze. Here, indeed, I was glad to make friends with an Intourist guide—a gay, quick young woman with dark untidy hair and an olive skin. With two Communist youths, friends of hers—a dancer and a building worker on holiday—we went for long mountain walks, carrying loaves and caviare and bottles of rough local wine, picnicking by idyllic torrents, visiting old astrakhan-capped shepherds in their remote hamlets and startlingly new sanatoria that had sprung up among the pinewoods. One of the boys was Russian; the other, the dancer, could hardly speak Russian at all; his language was Georgian. (I heard much of the enlightened Soviet reversal of Tsarist policy, which had for centuries repressed the individual cultures and languages of the subject—now associated—peoples.) Luckily, our girl guide could speak Russian, Georgian, and English. She was silenced only once—when we met a shepherd who couldn't speak even Georgian.

Tiflis was more of an Oriental city than any I had yet seen in the U.S.S.R. It had the bazaar-smells, the dusky, turbaned faces, the mysterious bells, the saffron flavour of a Cairo or a Calcutta; here was the junction, the merging and transmutation of several European and Asiatic cultures. There were still what must be called slums here; however 'picturesque', they were being pulled down pretty quickly. 'This is where workers have to live,' they said, averting their faces in shame and distaste. 'We do not care if bourgeois tourists think them pretty.' But there seemed to be no threat to the many tall-cupola'd churches of Tiflis. In street-markets I bought enormous melons and the best socks—of coarsely-woven yet fine local wool—that I have ever worn. I went into the public baths but was too timid to have one: there seemed to be, amid the clouds of steam, a good deal of agonizing but hilarious mutual flogging with boughs and branches.

From Tiflis I went by train down to the Black Sea. There were four of us in bunks in the sleeping-compartment—a Red Army Commander, a peasant grandfather, a stout woman; it was clean and reasonably comfortable; we shared our food; none of them



had any difficulty in contributing plenty to the common meal. The old peasant crooned a little before we went to sleep; he sang one of the songs I had heard the night before at a riotous funeral celebration into which I had strayed in a Tiflis basement café. (This was the only time I saw really wild drunkenness after the traditional Russian style. A Comsomol gulped a whole tumbler of vodka straight down, and fell flat on the floor. I was told that his inebriacy had delayed his promotion to the Party itself; he would certainly be censured for this new outburst, perhaps even expelled. Our host, a soldier, wept quietly for his dead father; that very day, too, his wife had given birth to a son in hospital; he intended to name the baby after its dead grandfather, he said, kissing me wetly on both cheeks.)

So friendly was the atmosphere in this train that I mentioned—a fact I hadn't tried to make use of in Russia—that I was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The news was received with an awe and an admiration that made me feel intensely ashamed. To them I was a member of the great leadership-organization that they saw incessantly at work, with its high standards of political knowledge and personal austerity of life: none but the most active and ardent could earn admittance to these responsibilities, this fellowship. Moreover, I was a member *in partibus infidelium*; I was, as we say now, 'in the front line'. They fingered my Party-card with touching reverence. I felt acutely conscious of my own unworthiness: how slight and sporadic had been the work I had done for the Party, how inadequate—because there were too many like me—the impact of the Party on the workers of Britain!

The Black Sea and Crimea coasts, along which I made my way to Odessa in a small pleasure-steamer, were a paradisaic postscript to my Russian trip. Here, stretched out naked on riviera sands or diving from rocks into water as blue as the Mediterranean, or convalescent in ornate, once-private parks and rococo villas and new glass-and-concrete hostels, or dancing by night in the open air, were hundreds of thousands of workers from all parts of the Soviet Union: mostly industrial workers, but some writers and artists among them. Each Union or other organization—the Red Army, for instance—had its own hostels, to which those of its members who most needed such a holiday were sent, by free vote of their comrades, with all expenses paid. The memory of this

coast has returned overpoweringly in later years, when pompous Britons have said to me—most hackneyed and absurd of anti-Soviet arguments—‘Ah, but you only saw what they wanted you to see.’ To which the reply is either ‘Well, go and see for yourself’ or ‘I’d like to see something like it in England, anyway’.

My companion on this trip, as far as Sebastopol, was an earnest and charming young Red Army man who had, fortunately, been learning English. English was much studied in the Army, he told me. The first words he spoke to me, when we had introduced ourselves, were, ‘Do you know “The Picture of Dorian Gray”? It is very beautiful’.

All too soon I had left him, and this delightful riviera, and the prosperous city of Odessa (where is the immense flight of steps that many will recall seeing in the ‘Potemkin’ film). I had to return to work, a missionary *in partibus*. . . . After what I had seen and experienced, my own land seemed flat, stale, and intolerably obsessed with Profit. But it was still my own land; my task lay here.

MARTIN TURNELL

## ELDORADO BANAL

*A Study of Baudelaire*

Quelle est cette île triste et noire?—C’est Cythère,  
Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons,  
Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.  
Regardez, après tout, c’est une pauvre terre.’

(*Un Voyage à Cythère*)

IN *Le Voyage* Baudelaire describes a little band of explorers setting out on a voyage round the world. They leave in a mood of great elation, but it changes almost at once to a mood of profound disillusionment. They see strange sights; they have novel experiences; but when they return, they confess that they were often as bored during the voyage as they had been at home. The world had turned out to be a small place and they were confronted everywhere by the same dreary spectacle of *l’immortel péché*. They

finish exactly where they started and there is nothing to do except to set out again on the same journey, a little battered, it is true, but still buoyed up by the same vain hopes of tracking down that very vague and elusive goal *du nouveau* which will provide relief from the boredom of their lives and a panacea for all ills.

Baudelaire's poetry is filled with voyages and plans for voyages. There are voyages round the world, voyages to fabulous islands, voyages round Paris, and even the 'voyage' of a bored monk pacing ceaselessly round and round his narrow cell. This passionate interest in travel is characteristic of modern poetry, but it is not altogether new. It had already made its appearance in medieval poetry, yet there is a world of difference between the journeys described in *The Divine Comedy* or *The Canterbury Tales* and those described in *Le Voyage* or *Le Bateau ivre*. The medieval poet was a pilgrim moving steadily towards a known goal and overcoming all obstacles in a spirit of Christian fortitude. Baudelaire was no pilgrim: he was in a special sense a tourist whose goal remained tantalisingly unknown, and he comments ironically on the singular fortune that led him to embark on a voyage *où le but se déplace*.

The voyages that he plans are many and varied, but the traveller is always the same. When we turn the pages of the *Fleurs du mal* we are constantly coming face to face with a solitary figure wearing a frock coat and black cashmere trousers, with a high waistcoat unbuttoned at the top to display a shirt of the finest linen partly hidden by the flowing black silk tie, and a curious conical-shaped top hat—*un chapeau important*, as one of his contemporaries admiringly called it—of his own design. The deep furrows round the mouth, the expression of suffering on his face and the thinning grey hair escaping under the hat make him appear more than his forty years; and when you look at him closely you notice that the clothes, too, are showing signs of wear that careful treatment is doing its best to conceal.

He moves slowly along the banks of the Seine, pausing, perhaps, to flick over the pages of a book on one of the *bouquinistes'* stalls—he is an authority on the erotic writings of the seventeenth century—then he continues his walk into the poorer parts of the city, a strange and incongruous figure in his splendid apparel. His eyes are fixed moodily on the ground as he broods over his debts, the trouble that he has had with his landlady and the

begging letter that he will have to write to his mother. From time to time he glances up at the *concierges* shuffling along in their carpet slippers on their way to market. His feelings are mixed. The tall buildings remind him of the masts of ships and the possibility of flight from these sordid surroundings to some exotic island; but he puts the thought out of his mind and returns to the fascinated contemplation of the problem of civilized man trapped amid the squalid horrors of modern industrialism.

For the setting as well as the purpose of the journey has changed. Dante's careful, logical universe with its heaven above and its hell beneath and Chaucer's wide tranquil English countryside have been replaced by the shapeless indifference of the great modern city. There are striking similarities between the 'Eldorado banal', with its symbolic figure dangling on the end of the gibbet, and 'the Waste Land', where the ruined impotent monarch reigns,<sup>1</sup> between Baudelaire's Paris and Eliot's London. Baudelaire's Paris is not a local affair, a mere emanation of his personal sensibility as Laforgue's is. Its significance is universal. It is the modern world and it is a sign of Baudelaire's greatness that he manages to present this world as a physical—a terrifyingly oppressive physical—reality.

The theme of the *Fleurs du mal* is a circular tour of the modern world which begins with *Bénédiction* and closes with *Le Voyage*. In the course of this circular tour Baudelaire examines all the great spiritual problems of the age. His age was a turning point in contemporary European history. Its materialism, its complacency and its facile slogans sapped the morale of the people and prepared the way for disaster. No one saw the dangers more clearly than Baudelaire, and it is because his age is still our age that he speaks to us more urgently, more intimately than any other modern poet.

Baudelaire's choice of theme gives his poetry its distinctive style. When you read some of his most characteristic pieces like *Le Beau navire*, *Le Balcon*, *La Chevelure*, *Un Voyage à Cythère* and *Le Voyage*, you find that a highly personal movement is common to them all. It is not a *forward* movement but a *circular* movement. A monologue in a play of Racine's, for example, moves steadily forward from one point to another and carries the whole play a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,  
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux. . . .'



stage further. Baudelaire's method is different. He takes a scene or a situation and examines it from every angle until the last drop of feeling has been extracted from it, but in the end he always returns to the starting place. All sorts of mysterious feelings emerge from the analysis, yet there is no development of feeling and the dominant mood remains unaltered.

'The only praise that I ask for this book', he wrote in the letter to Alfred de Vigny which accompanied a presentation copy of the second edition of the *Fleurs du mal*, 'is the recognition that it is not a mere album of verse, but that it has a beginning and an end. All the new poems are designed to fit into a singular framework that I had chosen.'<sup>1</sup>

It is this personal movement which gives the *Fleurs du mal* their unity and is, in fact, the *cadre singulier* that he refers to in the letter. His book is really one poem. All the principal pieces are built into this framework so that the whole book is present in each of the component parts, and this gives it its solidity and its internal coherence.

At the same time it must be recognized that the movement of his verse is a destructive movement. Images suggesting a circular movement recur constantly like shorthand references:

Mais la tristesse en moi monte comme la mer . . .

Onduleux, mon Désir qui monte et qui descend. . . .

The sea is a symbol of liberation in his poetry, but it is also a symbol of ceaseless, exhausting movement which brings no rest and no relief. Desires revolve in a circle, rising and falling, shifting and changing, until at last feelings destroy themselves by their own internal friction.

The poet's aim is a thorough examination of man and his surroundings, but though the 'tourist' always returns to his starting point and always talks of setting out again in pursuit of his elusive goal, the stresses of the voyage undermine his personality until they finally produce a state of complete interior collapse.

It can now be seen that the originality of Baudelaire's vision is inseparable from his remarkable technical originality, and this

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres 1841-1866*, Paris, 1906, p. 323.

gives him his immense stature among modern poets. He was not the leader of a literary movement: he was the founder of a school of poetry. There is a sharp distinction between a movement like the Romantic Movement and the School of Baudelaire. A literary movement means that a number of poets use a similar style to express feelings which are to some extent common to them all. The founder of a school is the creator of a fresh attitude towards the universe and the inventor of a new style. He succeeds in handing on his outlook and certain elements of his style to his successors who, within the limits of this framework, express their individual reactions to the new situation. Without Baudelaire there might have been no Corbière and no Laforgue, and Rimbaud would have been a very different poet.

It is a tribute to Baudelaire's vitality that after some early imitations of his work the development of later writers was always *away* from the master. It means that his poetry, instead of inviting imitation, was a genuine source of inspiration, a stimulus that encouraged further experiments and discoveries.

## II

'Il y avait autre chose dans *les Fleurs du mal* qu'un "frisson nouveau",' wrote Remy de Gourmont; 'il y avait un retour au vers français traditionnel.' There is a tendency among some of Baudelaire's critics to treat him as an isolated figure, but his poetry can only be fully appreciated when it is seen as part of the main French tradition. His relations with the seventeenth century and the Romantic Movement must be clearly grasped, and in stressing the combination of classical diction and a modern sensibility Gourmont put his finger on the essential point.

His relations with the seventeenth century can be seen most clearly in 'J'aime le souvenir':

J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues,  
Dont Phœbus se plaisait à dorer les statues.  
Alors l'homme et la femme en leur agilité  
Jouissaient sans mensonge et sans anxiété,  
Et, le ciel amoureux leur caressant l'échine,  
Exerçaient la santé de leur noble machine.  
Cybèle alors, fertile en produits généreux,  
Ne trouvait point ses fils un poids trop onéreux,

Mais, louve au cœur gonflé de tendresses communes,  
Abreuvait l'univers à ses tétines brunes.

L'homme, élégant, robuste et fort, avait le droit  
D'être fier des beautés qui le nommaient leur roi;  
Fruits purs de tout outrage et vierges de gerçures,  
Dont la chair lisse et ferme appelait les morsures!

Le Poète aujourd'hui, quand il veut concevoir  
Ces natives grandeurs, aux lieux où se font voir  
La nudité de l'homme et celle de la femme,  
Sent un froid ténébreux envelopper son âme  
Devant ce noir tableau plein d'épouvantement.

O monstruosités pleurant leur vêtement!

O ridicules troncs! torses dignes des masques!

O pauvres corps tordus, maigres, ventrus ou flasques,  
Que le dieu de l'Utile, implacable et serein,  
Enfants, emmaillota dans ses langes d'airain!

A critic of Mr. Middleton Murry's distinction has been able to say that Baudelaire 'made no technical innovations'. Now, it seems to me that his use of the alexandrine in this poem is an innovation of capital importance. He does not use it, as Corneille had done, to express the regularity, the stability of an established order. He uses it to express the sudden realization that the old order had vanished. He also uses it to express what might be termed an alien order, the tyranny of the new industrialism which had destroyed the old social solidarity and was gradually stifling man's natural human aspirations. The old order is deliberately evoked and the use of traditional French versification in the grand manner makes it a perpetual point of reference, a standard by which the present is tested and judged.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have limited the contrast to Corneille as it clearly does not apply in the same degree to Racine. Modern writers have stressed the resemblances between Racine and Baudelaire. It is easy to find verbal parallels between the two poets, but it must be remembered that these parallels were caused by a similarity in their positions. It is true that in a sense Racine's poetry reflects an order, but as I have tried to show in another place, this order was disintegrating from within. The focus was already shifting in Racine's time from the community to the individual life. The exploration of the unconscious had already begun; there was already a contrast between the regularity of the verse-form and the dissolution of feeling for which it was a vehicle. It is for this reason that, in spite of differences which will be discussed later, Baudelaire seems to continue something which had begun with Racine.

The poem seems at first to be a nostalgic longing to return to some simpler form of society, and we might pardonably mistake *l'homme, élégant, robuste et fort* for a character who had strayed from the pages of the *Contrat social*. *Souvenir*, however, is one of the words on which Baudelaire, like all very great poets, had set his personal stamp. Memory is a treasure house in which past experience is meditated and transformed. In this poem it is used to intensify the contrast between the old and the new orders, and in other poems it is used to suggest possible modes of fresh experience.<sup>1</sup> The statement of his theme is deliberately stylised and the irony behind 'Phœbus' and 'Cybèle', with their rococo associations, rules out any suggestion of sentimentality. The positive values suggested by *agilité*, *fertile* and *produits généreux*—*généreux* was a favourite word of Corneille's—are completely realized. Man's physical health is a symbol of spiritual health and Baudelaire is careful to stress the absence of that gnawing sense of insecurity which has been the source of many of our troubles. He also stresses the fact that these benefits were enjoyed in common (*tendresses communes*), but this enhances instead of diminishing the dignity of the individual life.

The reference to *droit* is interesting. The words *loi* and *droit* are constantly found in seventeenth-century poetry. They are the expression of the poet's sense of the existence of an established order. They are very seldom used by Baudelaire because he was preoccupied by the disappearance of this order. In its present context, *droit* implies that the society described was healthy because it was founded on a balance of rights and duties.

There is a sudden transition from the old order to the new, and the second section of the poem is a remarkable statement of one of the crucial problems of our time. There is always in Baudelaire's poetry a contrast between the hard, metallic words and words suggesting softness, corruption and collapse. They are juxtaposed in such a way that the hard words bring out the softness of the other words. The diction, too, becomes more complex

<sup>1</sup> The process is well illustrated by some lines from *La Chevelure*, which is built up round this conception of memory:

'Extase! Pour peupler ce soir l'alcôve obscure  
Des souvenirs dormant dans cette chevelure,  
Je la veux agiter dans l'air comme un mouchoir!'

As an instance of Baudelaire's brilliant use of the word:

'Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor'



and we are made to feel with great skill the *dieu de l'Utile* enfolding his 'children', who were once *élégant(s)*, *robuste(s)* et *fort(s)* in the *langes d'airain* from which they emerge *tordus, maigres, ventrus ou flasques*. They have been transformed by an unnatural upbringing into misshapen, shrunken, flabby, paunchy robots, into the anonymous slaves of a hideous machine. *Serein* and *implacable* underline the ruthlessness of the new Moloch.

The capital letter is a sign of the Poet's consciousness of his increased responsibility in a changing civilization. 'Si un poète demandait à l'État le droit d'avoir quelques bourgeois dans son écurie', he wrote in his diary, 'on serait fort étonné, tandis que si un bourgeois demandait du poète rôti, on le trouverait tout naturel'. Baudelaire was something of a *mystificateur*, but his 'dandyism' is not to be confused with the more spectacular gestures of his contemporaries whose highly coloured waistcoats and pranks with lobsters were forms of psychological compensation, were attempts to reassert themselves and to impress a section of the community that they feared and hated. His dandyism sprang from a genuine concern for human integrity. The poet had become the lonely champion of civilized values in a hostile society. What Baudelaire was fighting for is well expressed in two splendid lines:

De l'antique Vénus le superbe fantôme

Mais les bijoux perdus de l'antique Palmyre

The rich associations of *l'antique Vénus* and *l'antique Palmyre* stand for a great civilization which has completely vanished.

One of the principal differences between the literature of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries is that in the seventeenth century the poet had the weight of society behind him and in the nineteenth century he was the solitary opponent of an antagonistic society. The surprising thing about the nineteenth century is not that it was one of the greatest ages of French literature, but that in such an age there should have been any literature at all. Baudelaire's greatness does not consist least in the fact that he did not adopt a passive standpoint like the Romantics. In his poetry the antagonism between the poet and society became a positive factor of incalculable value, and the poetry was actually created by the resistance of the poet to the general tendencies of his age.

'J'aime le souvenir' is a general statement of the situation in which the poet found himself. In other poems he fills in the details of the picture. The impact of a hostile environment had become so much a part of his consciousness that he speaks of the world with its *voûte d'airain* and in another poem he writes:

Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse *comme un couvercle*  
 Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis,  
 Et que de l'horizon embrassant *tout le cercle*  
 Il nous verse un jour plus triste que les nuits. . . .

bringing home to us the sense of constriction and oppression that weighs on the poet imprisoned—the familiar image is there—in a circle.

In *Rêve parisien* he evokes the steel world where he is a prisoner:

. . . peintre fier de mon génie,  
 Je savourais dans mon tableau  
 L'enivrante monotonie  
 Du métal, du marbre et de l'eau.

Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,  
 C'était un palais infini,  
 Plein de bassins et de cascades  
 Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni;

Et des cataractes pesantes,  
 Comme des rideaux de cristal,  
 Se suspendaient, éblouissantes,  
 A des murailles de métal. . . .

The natural propensity of water is to flow, but in this world water loses its natural properties and is suspended motionless *comme des rideaux de cristal*.

The poet finds that his material has gone rigid and hard, for human faculties have not escaped the general process of petrification. In the lines:

Je suis belle, ô mortels! *comme un rêve de pierre*,  
 Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour,  
 Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour  
 Éternel et muet ainsi que la matière.

the effect depends on the contrast between the fluid 'dream'

and the rigid 'stone'. There are two distinct processes at work in Baudelaire's poetry. The domination of metal and stone, the sense of the fluid becoming solid, of the human becoming part of a soulless machine, gives his world its strange nightmare quality. This quality is heightened by a reverse process, by the disconcerting way in which cracks and fissures suddenly appear and the surface, which looks so solid, disintegrates to reveal the *néant*, the *gouffre* that lies beneath.

This brings us to one of the most striking of Baudelaire's technical devices. The poem which begins 'Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés' closes with the lines:

Ses yeux polis sont faits de minéraux charmants,  
Et dans cette nature étrange et symbolique  
Où l'ange inviolé se mêle au sphinx antique,  
  
Où tout n'est qu'or, acier, lumière et diamants,  
Resplendit à jamais, comme un astre inutile,  
La froide majesté de la femme stérile.

The mechanical courtesan of this poem, who is a sister of the 'enchantress' of the *Beau navire* and the heroine with the 'granite skin' in *Allégorie*, is a symbol not merely of 'the new woman', but of the new civilization. She knows all the tricks for pleasing, is well versed in the art of what Baudelaire called *le savant amour*: but beneath the brilliant exterior there is nothing. She is a sort of automatic machine for sexual intercourse.<sup>1</sup> The climax is achieved by the contrast between *froide majesté* and *femme stérile*. The machinery suddenly collapses, leaving only a tangled mass of broken springs and shattered properties. The judgement implied is a moral judgement, and by placing the *stérile* at the end of the last line Baudelaire makes us feel that the impact of the whole poem is behind this one word.

There is a still more impressive example in the terrific image at the close of the *Femmes damnées*:

L'âpre stérilité de votre jouissance  
Altère votre soif et roidit votre peau,  
Et le vent furibond de la concupiscence  
Fait claquer votre chair *ainsi qu'un vieux drapeau*.

The climax can only be fully appreciated when it is remembered

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'Machine aveugle et sourde, en cruautés féconde'.



that eighty lines of the poem are devoted to a detailed description of the soft and voluptuous atmosphere of the perverse loves which are its subject. Then, suddenly, the smooth skin withers, shrinks and bursts under the fiery blast of the wind and we hear only the flapping of the tattered banner on its pole. *Stérilité* is the pivot of the whole poem. Baudelaire certainly means us to regard sexual perversity as the symbol of an unnatural civilization, but there is no moralizing. His attitude, which is one of strict ethical orthodoxy, is completely fused in the poetic image.

The word *rêve* has occurred more than once in the passages discussed above and it provides a clue to Baudelaire's vision. The 'dream' is a *dédoublement* which enables us to see life simultaneously under two different aspects. A number of critics have drawn attention to the exactness of his descriptions of urban civilization, to lines like:

Le long du vieux faubourg, où pendent aux mesures  
Les persiennes, abri des secrètes luxures. . . .

La Prostitution s'allume dans les rues;  
Comme une fourmilière elle ouvre ses issues. . . .

He has succeeded better than any other modern poet in conveying the atmosphere of a great modern city—the mists rising over the Seine at dawn, the sun beating down remorselessly on the dry, dusty streets at noon, the sinister procession of beggars, murderers, drunkards, prostitutes and rag-pickers slinking through the twilight—and he owes his success to the combination of highly stylised imagery with a remarkable degree of realism, to the mingling of the dream-world and the actual world that we find in

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,  
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!

where the city of swarming multitudes is also the city of 'dreams', where the apparition clutches us by the arm 'in broad daylight'. He contrives to give us at one and the same time the brute fact and its interpretation.

The *Tableaux Parisiens* have been called 'objective studies pencilled in the margin of the principal tragedy'. They seem to me to have a more important purpose, to be an essential part of the

*Fleurs du mal*. The robots in 'J'aime le souvenir' are generalized figures, but in the *Tableaux Parisiens* the poet brings the particular individual before our eyes:

Il n'était pas voûté, mais cassé, son échine  
Faisant avec sa jambe un parfait angle droit.

Ces monstres disloqués furent jadis des femmes,  
Éponine ou Laïs!—Monstres brisés, bossus  
Ou tordus, aimons-les! ce sont encor des âmes.  
Sous des jupons troués et sous de froids tissus

Ils rampent, flagellés par des bises iniques,  
Frémissant au fracas roulant des omnibus,  
Et serrant sur leur flanc, ainsi que des reliques,  
Un petit sac brodé de fleurs ou de rébus. . . .

There is a deliberate element of distortion in these lines which provides a comment on the civilization which produces such people. The total effect is one of macabre comedy which is peculiarly Baudelaire's own. His special concern is with the destructive nature of contemporary life, and the accent falls on the words *cassé*, *brisés*, *disloqués*. The drama is not so much described as enacted. We hear the snap of breaking bone in *cassé* and the queer shuffling tread of the down-and-outs in *disloqués*.

Baudelaire sometimes uses theological terms in an ambiguous way, but the words *âme*, *ange*, *péché* and *mal* are usually employed in a strictly orthodox sense. In

. . . aimons-les! ce sont encor des âmes

or

Dans la brute assoupie un *ange* se réveille

the words *âmes* and *ange* represent positive values. It is Baudelaire's consciousness of the worth of the individual soul which is being destroyed that makes his view of the modern world essentially a tragic one and the ironic 'Éponine ou Laïs!' intensifies the tragedy.

'Tout enfant', wrote Baudelaire, 'j'ai senti dans mon cœur deux sentiments contradictoires: l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie.' His sense of the splendour and squalor of this city of flickering *becs de gaz*, small theatres with their flaming gas jets,

their smell of sawdust and resin and their tawdry trappings, has been expressed in some famous and beautiful lines that I cannot resist the temptation to quote:

—J'ai vu parfois, au fond d'un théâtre banal  
 Qu'enflammait l'orchestre sonore,  
 Une fée allumer dans un ciel infernal  
 Une miraculeuse aurore;  
 J'ai vu parfois au fond d'un théâtre banal  
 Un être, qui n'était que lumière, or et gaze,  
 Terrasser l'énorme Satan;  
 Mais mon cœur, que jamais ne visite l'extase,  
 Est un théâtre où l'on attend  
 Toujours, toujours en vain, l'Être aux ailes de gaze!

Baudelaire uses the words *banal*, *fané*, *suranné* and *défunt* to express his very personal sense of disenchantment. In the *théâtre banal* of this poem and the *Eldorado banal* of another, the hopes aroused by *théâtre* and *Eldorado* are crushed by the finality of *banal*, and the poet is left waiting for the 'miraculous dawn' and the 'ecstasy' that he knows will never come.

The poem is interesting for another reason. 'Un poème de Baudelaire', wrote Jacques Rivière,<sup>1</sup> 'est un système fermé; tout y regarde vers l'intérieur; les vers se tiennent ensemble comme des personnes assemblées en cercle. C'est parce que l'objet qu'ils expriment est un sentiment, quelque chose d'entièrement contenu dans l'âme, quelque chose qu'elle entoure et circonvient de toutes parts.' Baudelaire was driven by the disappearance of the old order to turn his eyes inwards, to burrow deeper and deeper into his own inner life in the hope, no doubt, of coming to some fresh common ground, but also because he was aware that the sensitive and highly civilized individual must provide the standards that were once provided by the community. The rhythms of his poetry weave themselves into our consciousness and in lines like

La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison

a screen seems to be interposed between the speaker and the outer world, isolating him on the 'balcony' or in some *alcôve obscure*

<sup>1</sup> Rimbaud, Paris, 1930, pp. 185-6.

where he can give his undivided attention to the exploration of his own inner life. Baudelaire was essentially an individualist, and whatever the starting point the way always leads back to 'the world within' where the main drama takes place. It is not true to say that he was not interested in the external world. He undoubtedly was, and it was the skill with which he held the balance between the two and succeeded in revealing the repercussions of events in his own mind that prevented him from becoming a poet of the Ivory Tower. The sudden change from the *théâtre banal* to

Mais mon cœur, que jamais ne visite l'extase,  
Est un théâtre où l'on attend . . .

is a perfect example of the process. In other words, the circular tour of the modern world is also a circular tour of the inner world:

—Mon âme est un tombeau que, mauvais cénobite,  
Depuis l'éternité *je parcours* et j'habite . . .

### III

Baudelaire's relations with the Romantic Movement are scarcely less important than his relations with the great classic writers. The danger of classicism is that poetic method hardens into a convention. It is no longer adequate to living experience because it leaves out too much and literature lags behind life. The order of the seventeenth-century writers was a true order, but life is never static and in literature no order can ever be the final order. Poetic method has to be adapted to the new forms of experience which are evolved as civilization develops.

In some lines was the realization that certain conventions must be overthrown and poetry brought back into contact with life. In writers like Hugo and Musset, however, this feeling was a vague aspiration and no more, and it was left to Baudelaire to give it point and direction. He steered a middle course between the extremes of classicism and romanticism. He did not try to throw over the whole classic heritage as the Romantics had done; he took what was valuable in both methods and transformed it into something new.



When, in some lines which are a good description of his own method, he spoke of *esclaves nus*

. . . dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir  
Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir

the *secret douloureux* looks suspiciously like the romantic malaise but is not. The romantic malaise was vague, adolescent, an illusion which depended in the last resort upon failure to analyse the mood and resolve it into its component parts. The *secret douloureux* of this poem, like the *mal inconnu* of another, is neither vague nor immature. It is capable of exact—sometimes of uncomfortably exact—definition:

Tu rappelles ces jours blancs, tièdes et voilés,  
Qui font se fondre en pleurs les cœurs ensorcelés,  
Quand, agités d'un mal inconnu qui les tord,  
Les nerfs trop éveillés raillent l'esprit qui dort.

The drama of the exhausted mind, unable to grapple with its problems, and the shattered nerves which leave it no rest, echoes and re-echoes through the poetry of the later nineteenth century and reappears in the work of contemporary masters who have been influenced by Baudelaire and his school.

We must not be misled, therefore, by Baudelaire's borrowings from the Romantics. His poetry is the supreme example of the way in which a great poet uses the *contemporary* language to express fresh feelings and perceptions. When he speaks of

. . . les vagues terreurs de ces affreuses nuits  
Qui compriment le cœur comme un papier qu'on froisse

he not only gives point to the *vagues terreurs* by the homely image of the crumpling paper; he succeeds in transmuting impalpable fears into physical sensation.<sup>1</sup>

These extracts help us to understand one of Baudelaire's principal contributions to poetry. He succeeded in exploring the whole of the mind as no other poet had explored it and integrating his findings in poetry. In the hands of Baudelaire and his school poetic method was turned into an instrument of incom-

<sup>1</sup> As another instance of the effect achieved by the conjunction of what Baudelaire called 'contrary' words, compare:

'Ta mémoire, pareille aux fables incertaines,  
Fatigue le lecteur ainsi qu'un tympanon.'

parable delicacy which was capable of penetrating into the farthest recesses of the mind and registering not only changes of mood, but the complex shift and play of feeling within the dominant mood.

His aim in some of the finest of his poems is the *total* analysis of states of mind which are variously described as *spleen*, *ennui*, *tristesse* and *mal*. When we compare his

L'*ennui*, fruit de la morne incuriosité

with Racine's

Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon *ennui*

it may seem that his method does not differ materially from that of Racine and a number of other French masters. It is true that he possessed Racine's power of translating obscure perceptions into language which has something of the precision of a mathematical formula and that his basic material is the same. This material had, however, been modified by changes which had taken place in civilization. New feelings had emerged; old feelings had broken up and formed fresh combinations like the pieces in a kaleidoscope.

Racine limited his analysis to the great primary emotions: love, hate, fear, jealousy, anger and revenge. Baudelaire analysed not only the great primary emotions, but also many subsidiary feelings and sensations contained in them. This accounts for a difference in method. The line from *Bérénice*, which defines Antiochus' *ennui*, is not unlike part of a geometrical proposition. Antiochus has been disappointed in love: therefore he goes into exile: therefore he feels *ennui*. In seven words we are given an incomparable picture of the East with its vast empty spaces and huge vistas of desolation open before us. We know exactly how Antiochus felt and why he felt as he did. There is nothing to add.

Racine's method is one of compression, Baudelaire's one of amplification. In Racine feelings and language are stripped to their bare essentials: in Baudelaire we find the same accumulation of sense-perceptions as in English poetry, the same marshalling of concrete objects and the same use of suggestion. His line comes from a poem called *Spleen*. It is worth noticing that *Spleen et Idéal* is the title of the first section of the *Fleurs du mal*, that *Spleen de Paris* is an alternative title of the *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, and that there

are in all four poems called *Spleen*. In Racine's poetry the great primary emotions are at bottom the same: the plays are variations on a theme and the variations are mainly due to different characters and situations. Baudelaire uses the word *spleen* to describe a variety of moods; but though they have certain common characteristics their component parts are by no means identical.

In this poem *ennui* is merely one term in the definition of *spleen*. It does not spring from a clear-cut *situation* as in *Bérénice*: it proceeds from another *feeling*, from *morne incuriosité*. This brings us to a further difference. Racine extracts only those elements from a situation which are strictly necessary for his purpose; but Baudelaire extracts one feeling from another feeling without limit and he sometimes pushes analysis to the point at which the feeling is destroyed. In another poem he writes of

Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui

and the line illustrates very well the process of extracting one feeling from another like a series of Chinese boxes.

The reasons for these differences are not difficult to discover. Racine lived in an age of transition, but he still lived in a clearly *definable* world. In the nineteenth century the whole basis of the spiritual and emotional life of the race was undergoing revolutionary changes, and it was the task of the poet to give an ordered presentation of new feelings at the moment of their formation.

The problem that confronted Baudelaire has been well described in a poem where he speaks of

De vastes voluptés, changeantes, inconnues,  
Et dont l'esprit humain n'a jamais su le nom!

The problem was to create a new language, to find names for the nameless feelings that were emerging from revolutionary changes taking place in civilization. His words also help us to understand the difficulties that his poetry presents for the reader. When you read him for the first time as a young man, you may think that he is simply a very skilful erotic poet and wonder whether his poetry, enjoyable as it certainly is, is really worth all the fuss that has been made about it. This difficulty persists, but as your knowledge increases it assumes a different form. It is still possible after years of study to feel doubtful whether very much has been said in some of the poems, whether there is anything particularly profound in

Et rien, ni votre amour, ni le boudoir, ni l'âtre,  
Ne me vaut le soleil rayonnant sur la mer.

It is even possible to mistake the lines

La glace qui les mord, les soleils qui les cuivrent,  
Effacent lentement la marque des baisers

for mere sophistication and to miss the wealth of experience behind them. Baudelaire succeeded magnificently in his task, but it would be idle to pretend that success was invariable and failure uncommon. No one who reads him carefully fails to notice his specialized vocabulary or the frequency with which certain sets of words recur. It will, I think, be possible to show that words expressing negative states like *ennui*, *spleen* and *chagrin* have greater precision and a greater degree of reality than words intended to express positive states like *volupté*, *luxé* and *langueur*. He managed to invest words with a special aura. This makes the sort of exegesis that the literary critic can apply to other great poets extremely difficult in his case and it is sometimes practically impossible to say what a poem is 'about'.

We have already seen that the starting point of Baudelaire's experience is a sense of physical constriction in unnatural surroundings. His reactions to this situation are extremely varied. Sometimes his one desire is to escape from his metal world into a world of fantasy, and there is a very seductive vein of spiritual defeatism running through his poetry:

Dis-moi, ton cœur, parfois, s'envole-t-il, Agathe,  
Loin du noir océan de l'immonde cité,  
Vers un autre océan où la splendeur éclate,  
Bleu, clair, profond, ainsi que la virginité?  
Dis-moi, ton cœur, parfois, s'envole-t-il, Agathe ?

It is significant that in this poem the voyage does not take him to a new world, but back to his childhood's days, freeing him for a moment from the anxieties and responsibilities and, above all, from the sense of guilt of manhood.

At other times he seems to believe that some superior reality is concealed behind the world of sensible appearances, anticipating Rimbaud's theory of the 'Voyant':



Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins  
 Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,  
 Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse  
 S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins!

The *ennuis* and the *vastes chagrins* are the reality here. The *Heureux celui qui peut . . .* implies that the poet has no hope of making the vigorous effort that he knows is needed. When he tries to describe the vision he falters at once. Any doubts that we may have had over the *splendeur* in *Moesta et errabunda* is confirmed by the vagueness of the *champs lumineux et sereins*. Baudelaire anticipates Rimbaud's weaknesses as well as his theories.

Baudelaire realized that any improvement in man's situation could only come through individual effort<sup>1</sup> and the moralist is evident in the remarkable line:

O toi, tous mes *plaisirs*! ô toi, tous mes *devoirs*!

where the *devoirs* exclude a hedonist solution. The moral effort needed is reflected in another poem where the 'desires' are compared to the slow, laborious movement of a caravan:

Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane,  
 Tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis.

Baudelaire regarded art and sexual love as the means of resisting the disintegrating forces of his time, and Eliot has spoken of 'the reaching out [in his poetry] towards something which cannot be had *in*, but which may be had partly *through* personal relations.'<sup>2</sup> It is found, for example, in *La Chevelure*:

Un port retentissant où mon âme peut boire  
 A grands flots le parfum, le son et la couleur;  
 Où les vaisseaux, glissant dans l'or et dans la moire,  
 Ouvrent leurs vastes bras pour embrasser la gloire  
 D'un ciel pur où frémit l'éternelle chaleur.

It must be said at once that these lines are among the most beautiful that Baudelaire ever wrote, but they are also a perfect illustration of the difficulties referred to earlier. The success of

<sup>1</sup> 'Il ne peut y avoir de progrès (vrai, c'est-à-dire moral) que dans l'individu et par l'individu lui-même.' (*Mon cœur mis à nu.*)

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Essays*, p. 376.

the poem as a whole lies in its peculiar atmosphere, in the rich, voluptuous sense of mature love that it manages to convey. At the same time we cannot help recalling, a little uneasily, Laforgue's penetrating comment that in Baudelaire the verse *enchasuble* the subject.<sup>1</sup> For when we look into it, we see that this is an attempt to describe 'the Good Life'; but though it is a superb description of the poet's feelings on attaining his vision, the vision itself eludes him. His conception of 'the Good Life' seems to be no more than a riot of sound, scent and colour. The words are immensely suggestive—indeed they suggest far too much—but they seem to be without positive content either because the poet has no real conception of 'the Good Life' or because the words are incapable of expressing the reality. Nor are we reassured when in the next verse we come across

Et mon esprit subtil que le roulis caresse  
Saura vous retrouver, ô féconde paresse!  
Infinis bercements du loisir embaumé!

For it is legitimate to ask whether the *esprit subtil* is being put to a proper use. The linking of *subtil* and *paresse* is characteristic of Baudelaire's habit of linking words which express sharp, precise sensations or sensations of extreme vitality and words which blunt their sharpness or undermine their vitality.

The more we read the *Fleurs du mal*, the more apparent it becomes that while Baudelaire is a magnificent analyst of the sensations of disintegration and collapse, he fails to describe convincingly the positive goal towards which he is struggling. When he tries to define the crucial word *extase* he can produce nothing more lucid than

O métamorphose mystique  
De tous me sens fondus en un

which is the fruit of the dubious psychology of the *Correspondances*. And in the celebrated lines

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,  
Luxe, calme et volupté.

I have never felt that the word *ordre* has the positive force that Eliot ascribes to it in his essay on 'Baudelaire in Our Time'.

<sup>1</sup> *Mélanges posthumes*, Paris, 1903, p. 115.

There is always a contrast between imagined beatitude and comfortless actuality, and the heart of Baudelaire's experience is an interior desolation. So in the splendid

Le Printemps adorable a perdu son odeur!

there is a passionate desire for a new life behind the *Printemps adorable* which can never be realized. In another poem he writes:

Un soleil sans chaleur plane au-dessus six mois,  
Et les six autres mois la nuit couvre la terre.

Again:

Voilà que j'ai touché l'automne des idées,  
Et qu'il faut employer la pelle et les râteaux  
Pour rassembler à neuf les terres inondées,  
Où l'eau creuse des trous grands comme des tombeaux.

The life-giving water turns into a flood which destroys instead of irrigating. His constant preoccupation is with the *vécu*, and the burden of his song is that life is finished:

—Quand notre cœur a fait une fois sa vendange,  
Vivre est un mal!

There are some passages in the diaries which throw a good deal of light on this sense of failure:

'L'amour, c'est le goût de la prostitution. Il n'est même pas de plaisir noble qui ne puisse être ramené à la prostitution. Dans un spectacle, dans un bal, chacun jouit de tous.

'Qu'est-ce que l'art? Prostitution.'

'Qu'est-ce que l'amour? Le besoin de sortir de soi. L'homme est un animal adorateur. Adorer, c'est se sacrifier et se prostituer. Aussi tout amour est-il prostitution. . . . Goût inamovible de la prostitution dans le cœur de l'homme, d'où naît son horreur de la solitude.—Il veut être *deux*. L'homme de génie veut être *un*, donc solitaire. La gloire, c'est rester *un*, et se prostituer d'une manière particulière.'

The vital word is *prostituer*. It is not only the man of genius but every civilized man who wants to feel himself 'one' in a civilisation that is perpetually undermining the unity of the individual

life. 'L'art', wrote Baudelaire in another passage, 'est un agent civilisateur'. The tragedy was that in practice art and love, which should have been the means of preserving human integrity, were both forms of 'prostitution' and failed to prevent the waste of the sovereign gifts of intelligence and imagination. The poet's desire to preserve civilized values is doomed to frustration. In a hostile world he remains, ironically, *riche, mais impuissant*.

It is fashionable to treat Baudelaire's diaries as *bêtises* or, at best, as case-books for the psychologist. Nothing could be more mistaken. They contain some of his profoundest comments on civilization. The dilemma, which is described in theoretical terms in the passages given above, is strikingly illustrated in the practical sphere by the letter to Madame Sabatier of 31st August, 1857, written apparently the day after the breakdown of the Platonic make-believe:

'Et enfin, enfin, il y a quelques jours, tu étais une divinité, ce qui est si commode, ce qui est si beau, si inviolable. Te voilà femme, maintenant. . . . Enfin, arrive ce que pourra. Je suis un peu fataliste. Mais ce que je sais bien, c'est que j'ai horreur de la passion—parce que je la connais, avec toutes ses ignominies. . . .<sup>1</sup>

These are strange words, but they illustrate very well Baudelaire's radical incompatibility for life as it was in the nineteenth century, and this incompatibility is everywhere apparent in the poetry. In

Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive,  
Comme au long d'un cadavre, un cadavre étendu

the hollow thud of the repeated *cadavre* emphasises the connection between passion and death, and in the characteristic

—O fureur des cœurs mûrs par l'amour ulcérés!

we are reminded that in the last analysis passion, instead of being a means of life, is essentially destructive.

Hence the conclusion:

Que bâtir sur les cœurs est une chose sotte;  
Que tout craque, amour et beauté . . .

Baudelaire's poetry abounds in descriptions of the final collapse and ruin of the individual:

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres 1841-1866*, pp. 138-9.



'Mon *esprit* est pareil à la tour qui succombe  
Sous les coups du bélier infatigable et lourd.'

'Et le riche métal de notre *volonté*  
Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste' (Satan)

'Mon *cœur* est un palais flétri par la cohue.'

'Vainement ma *raison* voulait prendre la barre;  
La tempête en jouant déroutait ses efforts,  
Et mon *âme* dansait, dansait, vieille gabarre  
Sans mâts, sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords!'

These lines are a masterly expression of the destructive forces that attack the individual. The admirable precision of the language brings home to us the general paralysis that creeps over man, infecting the 'heart' (for Baudelaire the seat of the affections), rotting the 'will', corroding the 'mind', rendering 'reason' impotent and finally reducing the whole man (this is the sense of *âme*) to a state of helplessness, drifting on the stormy shoreless ocean where he finally disintegrates like an old ship.

One of the tragedies of the contemporary world is that the intellect, instead of introducing order, contributes to the general collapse. The last word on the destructive role of the intellect is to be found, a little surprisingly, in Baudelaire's early autobiographical story, *La Fanfarlo*:

'Nous nous sommes tellement appliqués à sophistiquer notre cœur, nous avons tant abusé du microscope pour étudier les hideuses excroissances et les honteuses verrues dont il est couvert, et que nous grossissons à plaisir, qu'il est impossible que nous parlions le langage des autres hommes. Ils vivent pour vivre, et nous, hélas! nous vivons pour savoir. Tout le mystère est là. L'âge ne change que la voix et n'abolit que les cheveux et les dents; nous avons altéré l'accent de la nature, nous avons extirpé une à une les pudeurs virginales dont était hérissé notre intérieur d'honnête homme. Nous avons psychologisé comme les fous, qui augmentent leur folie en s'efforçant de la comprendre. Les années n'infirment que les membres, et nous avons déformé les passions.'

#### IV

I have dwelt on Baudelaire's spiritual defeatism and on what seem to me to be his failures, but I do not wish to give the

impression that his attitude was predominantly defeatist or that his failures, significant as they certainly are, lessen the value of his work as a whole. His attitude is not consistent in the sense that the classic writer's is. His purpose—it is this that distinguishes him from any of his predecessors—was not to examine experience from a fixed, unchanging standpoint or to demonstrate the excellence of one particular attitude. It was to explore all the different possible attitudes that were open to the contemporary man.

It has been said of him that he gave expression to something that was diffused in the air about him. The measure of his success is paradoxically the completeness, the finality of his picture. No problem, no aspect of modern urban civilization, seems to have eluded him. The great city is there with its bustle and industrialism, its palaces and its slums, its stuffy middle-class apartments filled with ugly but expensive furniture and artificial flowers.

His mingling of classical diction with conversational style, archaic words with modern colloquialisms, enabled him to reveal human nature to itself in a new way. For the man whose feelings are analysed is no rootless intellectual. He is a cultured European who is fully aware of his great heritage and the dangers to which it is exposed. The continuity of his work with the work of the great writers of the past is absolute. Every line, every word, has behind it layers and layers of civilized human experience, and this gives his poetry its richness and maturity and its strange resonance. He is unrivalled in his knowledge of the human heart; every kind and degree of sexual passion seems to be known to him as he moves from an extreme simplicity to an extreme sophistication in a way that was entirely beyond the range of the poets of the past. The experiences that he records are not something that happened to an isolated individual: they are something that happened to human nature at a particular stage in its development, and it is for this reason that his single volume of poetry has modified the sensibility of generations of sensitive readers.

Although Baudelaire increased the potentialities of human experience, he was in no sense a writer who indulged in a cult of unrelated feelings for their own sake. He was, no doubt, the great laureate of a collapsing civilization, but his work bears the impress of a powerful personality. No other nineteenth-century writer saw through the popular slogans of the day and the religion of progress more completely than he. But though the

*Fleurs du mal* is a tremendous indictment of a corrupt society, Baudelaire was in no way a reformer; he had no 'policy' and nothing of the crusading spirit. His insistence on original sin shows that he did not try, like later reformers, to evade responsibility by attributing man's ills to economic factors or believe that they could be cured by some facile economic reshuffle. He realized that the problems were spiritual, but his work was to present the problems, not to find solutions. Later in the century Lautréamont proclaimed that 'La poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique,' and Rimbaud's reforming zeal drove him out of poetry altogether. Such views were entirely alien to Baudelaire's nature. His poetry always halts at the point where it seems about to merge into theology, and his 'tour' ends on a mark of interrogation. It was because he was so completely an artist, so disdainful of the view that poetry should inculcate a moral, that he remains after all the greatest European poet of the century.

## AUGUSTUS JOHN

# FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—IV

JOHN SAMPSON could turn a phrase better than most. If his manner verged on the pompous it was only in keeping with his physique, which was big and portly. Besides *Romani* he cultivated the mysterious jargon of the Tinkers, known as *Shelta*, and had mastered both *Back* and *Rhyming* slang. In later years he added Sanskrit to his stock. His measured speech combined with an insolent display of superior knowledge and a jeering style of humour served him usefully with strangers who were quickly reduced to that condition of discomfort which he aimed at. He thus was enabled to conceal from the world his own shrinking and extremely vulnerable sensibility. His translations from Heine, FitzGerald, etc., into his beloved *Romani* are perfect in their kind and his edition of William Blake remains a monument of accurate and well-inspired scholarship. He admitted but few friends in his life, the chief being Walter Raleigh and Robert Bridges. The fact that the *Rai* was nearly twice my age helped to save our relationship

from such dangers as menaced it from his perverse temper and my quick one. If we sometimes quarrelled, sooner or later we always made it up. Our visits to Cabbage Hall and other places where gypsies gathered were rich in incident. Cabbage Hall in reality was a patch of waste land upon which the Boswells were accustomed to encamp during the winter. Here I became familiar with people bearing such names as Noah, Kenza, Eros, Bohemia, Sinfai, Athaliah, Counseletta, Alabaina, Tihanna, Simpronius, Queenation, Saiforella, etc. The *Chais*, or young women, elegant and provocative, led one into a region of pitfalls where sentiment was countered by an oblique and derisory intelligence. With a good ear and endless curiosity, I soon became proficient in English Romani and may even have been guilty at times of the ineptitude of trying to teach gypsies their own language; but it was not till I visited the village of Bettwys-gwerfil-goch that I made a direct acquaintance with the complexities of the Welsh dialect as recorded by Sampson in the learned pages of *The Gypsy Lore Journal* and preserved by the tri-lingual family of the Woods. Among these gypsies were some excellent harpists and all seemed to fiddle as a matter of course. As the Welsh can always be depended upon for a song, our gatherings in the wayside inns were entertaining and instructive, Sampson being on the *qui vive* for any rare word or locution, while the Gypsies vied with each other in sounding the depths of the *Purikano cib* or ancient tongue.

Liverpool, which I believe is commonly considered a somewhat dull commercial city, for me abounded in interest and surprise. I explored appreciatively the sombre district on the Mersey side, populated largely by migrant Scandinavians; the *Goree Piazza* faintly reeking of the Slave Trade, where perhaps a few be-ringed and superannuated buccaneers might still be found day-dreaming over their rum; in the Chinese quarter attempted and failed to achieve the *Kif* in the company of dishevelled and muttering addicts of The Laughing God; not without trepidation I penetrated into the lodging-houses of the tinkers off the Scotland road, where a rough and outlandish society assembled round the communal fire in a mood of precarious good-fellowship.

My contacts with the university people were not pushed to extremes, but I knew well (and painted) John McDonald Mackay, Oliver Elton and Kuno Meyer and when Walter Raleigh, then at Oxford, revisited his old friends I was staggered by the cool



brilliance of his mind. He shone even at breakfast. Another visitor from Oxford, York Powell, I found a most congenial character. Charles Bonnier, who was more interested in the theory and practice of *pointillisme* than in his academic duties was also a personage carrying a suggestion of Parisian modernism into the frowsy atmosphere of Brownlow Hill.

C. H. Reilly, when he arrived to occupy the chair of Architecture with signal success, and out of a superabundance of energy and good will founded the Liverpool Repertory Theatre, was a valuable acquisition whom later on I painted. Scott Macfie, an eccentric gypsy scholar, when on friendly terms with Sampson, would join us in our adventures.

Perhaps the most important of my Liverpool portraits was that of the Lord Mayor, Chaloner Dowdall. This when exhibited proved a nine-days wonder and a riot with the possible destruction of the work, was only averted by the prompt action of the police. I have never understood why my innocent picture aroused the fury of the Liverpudlians, though I was told that the fact that I had included the Lord Mayor's Sword-bearer in the composition (without extra charge) had something to do with it. Dowdall defended me loyally, and I am glad to say found his reward later, when, being in need of cash, he sold his picture very profitably and bought himself a country house. The picture changed hands several times, always at an enhanced price, and was lately acquired by an Australian Art Gallery.

Hearing that Esmeralda Groome (*née* Boswell) was encamped on the Wirral, we paid a visit to this famous gypsy. An agreeable and lively woman, she still retained traces of that beauty which had inflamed Hubert Smith and Frances Hindes Groome (and maybe others). Upon leaving she presented me with *Rhoda Boswell's Courtship*, a book of poems, interlarded with gypsy words, by Theodore Watts-Dunton which the author had given her. Writing her name on the back page she remarked '*Sor dinveriben, Raia*' (it's all nonsense, sir). Sampson and I subsequently called at the Pines, Putney, and were received by Watts-Dunton who, much to my disappointment, refused to produce Swinburne: it appeared he was upstairs and not feeling well. Watts-Dunton had had something to do with gypsies, but already hard of hearing, we found on addressing him in Romany, that his deafness became insuperable. Growing at last tired of

Sampson's company, I abandoned him in the Euston Road while he was having his boots polished, and made my way home to Matching Green, Essex, with his voice, by some curious hallucination, croaking in my ear all the way. Like making a new friend, to break with an old one, even at some physical discomfort, is one of the major intellectual satisfactions within one's reach. I now decided to take to the road, at any rate for a spell. My caravan, fetched from Dartmoor, now rested at Effingham. I obtained a second van, a light cart and a few horses, including an old black hunter upon which I sometimes rode ahead to select a stopping-place. I engaged a young man as groom. With Dorelia, her sister and a little band of children we set forth and, skirting London, made for Cambridge where I had some work to do. One evening, the horses being tired, I halted the procession at a wayside Inn near Watford, and inquired of the landlord if we could get a pull-in for the night. With great civility we were told that the yard was already full, but that a mile further on I would find ample accommodation in the forecourt of another Inn. Riding on, therefore, I put my case before the second publican who agreed to take us. When, however, I returned with the rest of the company, this man rushed out in a state of violent agitation, and making the extraordinary statement that 'he had thought we was *Pantechnicons*' swore that he wouldn't have our class of people at any price. There was nothing for it but to go back and throw ourselves on the mercy of our first acquaintance. He proved the best of hosts, made room for us in his yard and entertained us for a week. This good fellow was a natural buffoon and every evening dressed up in absurd clothes for the amusement of his clients. At Cambridge, we encamped in a field by the Cam, and I would drive in every day to Newnham College to paint Jane Harrison. This famous Greek scholar was an invalid, and I portrayed the wonderful woman reclining on her couch, while she smoked cigarettes and chatted learnedly with Gilbert Murray. Murray, with Rupert Brooke, visited us now and then at the camp, both very charming, good-natured and playful with the children. Rupert Brooke was distinguished by a blond and healthy style of beauty of which he was naturally not unconscious. Beyond a visit to James Strachey at Kings' I saw little of University life. Some of the undergraduates boating past our camp, displaying a lack of good taste, incurred the anger of Dorelia, and

were duly castigated by her. My ill-selected groom on one occasion, meeting me with the trap, and in a pugnacious mood, it fell to me to correct him, and I drove him back considerably the worse for the encounter. From Cambridge we trekked to Norwich where I left the family encamped on a piece of waste ground, while I proceeded to Liverpool to paint the Lord Mayor. This task accomplished, I returned and harnessing up, once more we moved on, this time towards the coast. As I rode ahead my poor black horse stumbled and fell. I walked him into the village of Palling, stabled him and treated him as best we could, but, injured internally, we were unable to save his life. Here I dismissed my useless groom. After a stay at Palling we moved northwards to pull in at last at my friend Charles Slade's home. On the way I lost another horse, weakened through Arthur, the groom's, neglect. A gypsy gave me a pound for the carcass. I now received a letter from a New York lawyer, John Quinn, asking me to paint his portrait while on a visit to London. This decided me to return to 153 Church Street, Chelsea, and our wanderings were at an end for a while.

John Quinn turned out to be a pleasant, jocular and open-handed Irish-American. We became very friendly, and later on I shall have a good deal to recount of our relations, for he returned to Europe subsequently, and we visited France together on more than one occasion..

Removing to Paris we occupied varying quarters on and off for a year or two before returning to England after the loss of my sweet wife. At Paris I knew but few artists. Rodin's acquaintance I made, however, through the mediation of Will Rothenstein. Together we visited the Master at Meudon, and at his studios, Rue de l'Université. I called on Anquetin, of whom Conder used frequently to talk with vast admiration, and I found this burly fellow at the summit of his 'Rubens' phase of development. He had for the fifth time discovered 'the only way' to paint and was surrounded by superb and voluptuous nudes glazed with bistre upon a monochrome of black and white. Upon leaving he invited me to come and work with him '*et nous en ferons des choses!*' Sometimes I have regretted that I never returned. Under his robust leadership, I would have acquired the *grand métier* and within its salutary limitations, perhaps have become infinitely productive.

My chief friend at this time was a Frenchman, Maurice Cremnitz, an obscure *employé* during the day; in the evenings he emerged from his mysterious bureau and became what Barbey d'Aurevilly might have called (cryptically) *un Cyclop du Pavé* (he made no pretensions to Barbey's *Dandyisme*). His profound knowledge of the lower parts of Paris, his witty and sometimes scaring tongue (which his friends had reason to be afraid of) and his genial and well-informed mind made him an enchanting companion. A member of the *Cercle* of the *Closerie des Lilas*, presided over by Jean Moreas, he introduced me to this assemblage of literary folk, Paul Fort, Guillaume Apollinaire, André Salmon, Adolphe Retté and many others were to be found here of Wednesday evening, and though a complete outsider, I enjoyed the hubbub. Moreas, with his top hat and monocle, presented a fierce and arrogant mask to the world. The organ of this society *Vers et Prose* was ably conducted by Paul Fort's brother Robert. By the device of printing periodically the names of all subscribers he insured the journal's success and them a modicum of literary distinction. Numerous Belgians took advantage of this and their *snobisme* kept the magazine going. After the *Cercle* broke up at a late hour, Cremnitz, the 'Prince des Poètes', and I would sometimes roam Paris visiting those wine shops where the *vin blanc* was both good and cheap, now and then at some risk descending into the *Caveau des Innocents* in the neighbourhood of *The Halles*, resort of *apaches*, *maquereaux* and their *mômes*. My French companions with reason aware of the hazards we ran in such a society, were inclined to be self-conscious and on their guard, but I, with no sense of danger, found myself very much at home in this Villonesque atmosphere.

One morning when Cremnitz had been discoursing on the beauties of *Gothic*, insisting on its essentially *classic* quality of *symmetry*, I mentioned with some diffidence that Notre Dame at least was far from symmetrical. He accepted my challenge and descending from the heights of Montmartre, we viewed the Cathedral from the Pont du Louvre, where he was forced to admit the correctness of my observation which had detected some two-thirds difference in bulk between the twin towers. Cremnitz brought to my studio a rather silent young man called Picasso. Although his name presented difficulties, it was beginning to be mentioned as belonging to a Spanish painter of interest.



Having examined my drawings attentively he left, inviting me to visit his studio in Montmartre. This a few days later I did and was immediately struck by his powers. At this time he was engaged on an immense canvas containing a number of figures based, it would seem, on a recent acquaintance with the monstrous images of Easter Island, but he showed me other works which displayed an almost equal sympathy with the traditions of less remote cultural sources, including even some of his own continent. With astonishing virtuosity this restless spirit seizes upon, in turn, every manifestation of Art providing the kind of material he needs with which to juggle and incidentally stimulate the appetite of a public avid for novelty and mystification. Anything but primitive himself, he has found in Primitive Art a means of escape from the boredom which overcomes the sophisticated in the face of objective nature. By an acrobatic sense of style he converts such motifs to his own uses with the surprising results we know and often admire. A psychologist rather than a decorator, this Mediterranean hybrid brings to light from mysterious depths those elements of drama upon which his genius feeds, and for which he invents a symbolism derived maybe from the visible world, but discoloured and transformed under his hand as if by the operation of a drug into some nameless arabesque.

The genial grandeur of Daumier's imagination seems to have induced in Picasso a reaction of dubious sentimentality. The Saltimbanque has been undermined with phthisis, the emaciated old mendicant plucks one last sad chord from his guitar; the hydrocephalous boy gazes blankly out on a blue world; the pseudo-classic woman attends abstractedly to her unlikely brood. . . .

In another and later mood the artist under the compulsion of his dæmon imagines unheard of formulæ by means of which what would appear to be voluptuous the torments of the unconscious are resumed in a series of flamboyant, obscene, and highly-convoluted simulacra.

Gazing amazedly one day and for the first time at some pictures by the *Douanier Rousseau*, a stranger came up to me and enquired innocently *est-ce que c'est fait exprès?* A very searching question, and in my opinion the answer is 'No', for the Douanier could not have done otherwise than he did, but I am aware certain critics have disputed his elaborate *naïveté* as they would, I suppose, the evidence of their senses.

A summer spent at Equihen, near Boulogne, was pleasant and profitable. I have always been partial to fisher-folk, and the people of Equihen and Le Portel, in their distinctive costume, were excellent models. These blonde women and girls, of, it would appear, a separate race must, in the eighteenth century, have been still more vivid, but Sir Joshua Reynolds, who visited the place, apparently noticed nothing, for in his diary he makes no mention of them. With the world's universal trend towards a characterless uniformity the Boulogne *matelotes* have lost their magnificent head-dresses, which are preserved only in a few old photographs. In England the leading eighteenth-century painters being entirely urban and subservient to the exigencies of rank and fashion, had no eye or perhaps no time for the regional life of their day, and the nineteenth century saw the last remnants of popular cultural traditions perish under the frown of an ignorant, sanctimonious and parvenu *bourgeoisie* which, elevated upon the principles of self-help, child torture and mass enslavement had with the support of the Church obtained ascendancy in the social life of England. It was at Equihen that I witnessed a curious and I think a unique occurrence. Returning one evening from a walk upon the sands which stretch westwards in the direction of Etaples, I observed the sun to set opposite me, that is to say, in the east. No one else appeared to have noticed this phenomenon, but I cannot see how I could have been mistaken. Apart from its eccentric behaviour the sunset itself was in no way remarkable.

Life in Paris at this time was of a simpler order, the tempo slower than to-day. If being in a hurry one took a *fiacre* to be drawn gently along by an exhausted horse, under the guidance of its disillusioned *cocher*, one only arrived a little late for one's appointment. Sitting at the *café* I wondered who could those grave long-bearded young men be, who passed carrying portfolios, and what did these contain? And the foreigners who mused for hours over a cup of cold coffee, what could they be thinking of? The waiters would attend with indifference to the too frequent orders of hilarious tourists who seemed to think they had arrived at a city given up entirely to debauchery, though no signs of it met the eye. At those places of entertainment where pornography was staged and organized on a business basis with *Les Quadrilles* performed by sullen *Filles* I found the public exhibition of the *Dessous* only caused me embarrassment with a distaste for my

fellows and a rising tendency towards Virginolatry. Paris, the worst place to be idle, the best place to work in, offers for recreation in the evenings the endless processional of the Grands Boulevards. I could never accustom myself to the teeming pandemonium of the streets. On the terraces of the *Nouvelle Athènes* or the *Rat Mort* I seemed to see the ghosts of the last enchanted epoch. The elegant silhouette of Manet, the noble figurehead of Pissarro, the wise and childlike countenance of Renoir, the uncouth scowl of Cezanne, the formidable correctitude of Degas. The little Place du Tertre had not then been converted into a bad open-air restaurant with sham artists in velvet parading their portfolios and meretricious female students their covert charms under the specious excuse of a few abominable drawings. The *Café des Assassins* over the *Butte* was still tenanted by genuine homicides, the *Moulin de la Galette* revolved to the old familiar tune: the *Bal Tabarin* had not been corrupted by foreign gold. Jazz was unknown and the ululation of the crooner unheard. Instead such pleasant ditties as 'Caroline', 'Miette', 'Viens poule-poule', and 'La petite Tonkinoise' were popular. Henry Lamb and I used to sit for hours, Rue de la Gaité, enjoying the satanic din of an unusually efficient mechanical orchestra. As artist musician he was able to appreciate fully the qualities of this instrument and unravel its complicated and profoundly ironical symbolism. In place of an ultra-refined 'Announcer', we had Percy Wyndham Lewis to disseminate the news and like an incarnate *Loki* sow dissension with it. Impatient of mental leisureliness or laziness, as it would appear to him, he sought to ginger up his friends, or patients as they might be called, by a policy of indirect and subterranean intervention, provoking them to an activity which was sometimes mischievous by a whisper here, a disturbing suggestion there. Stimulated and troubled as I have often been by Lewis's subtle and imaginative mind, I have never confused painting with politics and have managed to keep myself unidentified with any particular camp. When Marinetti conducted his lightning campaign in London, unlike Lewis, I remained unmoved. It seemed to me clear that there could be no future, as there was no past, for 'Futurism'. As regards religion, too, I have preserved a convenient detachment which permits me to enjoy impartially the splendours of the Roman Rite or the unadorned white-wash of a Quaker meeting-house. It is true, at one time, I took

part in a series of discussions having for their object the manufacture of a new religion—Eric Gill's idea appeared to take the shape of a Neo-Nietzschean doctrine of super-humanity under the sign of the Ithyphallus. As for me I favoured the return of the Earth-Goddess in an enclosed waggon, oxen-drawn and attended by white-robed and dancing *choroi*—Jacob Epstein's solution was simpler, consisting merely in the divination of himself, magnified and blowing his own trumpet. For a time I became interested in Auguste Comte and his gospel. But I was unable to hold with a religio-philosophy which based itself on the worship of the great. Such foundations appeared to me insecure. 'Put not your faith in Princes'—no, nor in great men neither! For greatness fluctuates with time and may dwindle under the inverted telescope of Posterity. I knew that I could depend on Will Rothenstein to turn wine into water and that the rest would then follow.

However this may be I didn't catch on to Positivism in spite of the charm of the doctor friend who attempted to convert me, but pursued my way in a state of spiritual irresponsibility. The difficult standards of Art I had set myself to follow claimed all my attention as failure after failure attested. In France, the *Grande Lignée* of painting starting with Jean Fouquet and the École d'Avignon and descending via Francois Clouet, Jacques Callot, Louis le Nain, Nicholas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, towards the masters of the eighteenth century, La Tour, Watteau, Fragonard, Chardin, etc., and in the nineteenth Gericault, Delacroix, Daumier, Corot, Ingres, Courbet, till we arrive at the protagonists of so-called 'Impressionism', represented for me the great, the authentic Tradition, to which undismayed by its splendour, I dedicated myself.

Not that I was exclusively attached to the French Branch of the European Tree, for ultimately it is to Italy I would trace my cultural beginnings: names such as Giotto, Duccio, Massacio, Piero della Francesca, Signorelli Piero di Cosimo, Raphael, have for me the refulgence of precious stones set in the diadem of a princely and Apollonian line.





AUGUSTUS JOHN, R.A.: STUDY OF DORELIA. (Collection Lady Bowyer-Smyth)



PETER WATSON

## JOAN MIRO

THE painting of Joan Miro is typically Spanish with its vitality, brilliance, gaiety, violence and passionate love of the essentials of life. Born in 1893, in Montroig, near Barcelona, Miro was forced by his father to discontinue his art studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Barcelona for a business career, but at the age of eighteen he finally left his office for the Gali Academy. At this time he could only draw in flat planes with coloured lines and, in order to teach his pupil form, Professor Gali bound his eyes and made him draw objects by sense of touch only. For the same reason he was also taught pottery and sculpture.

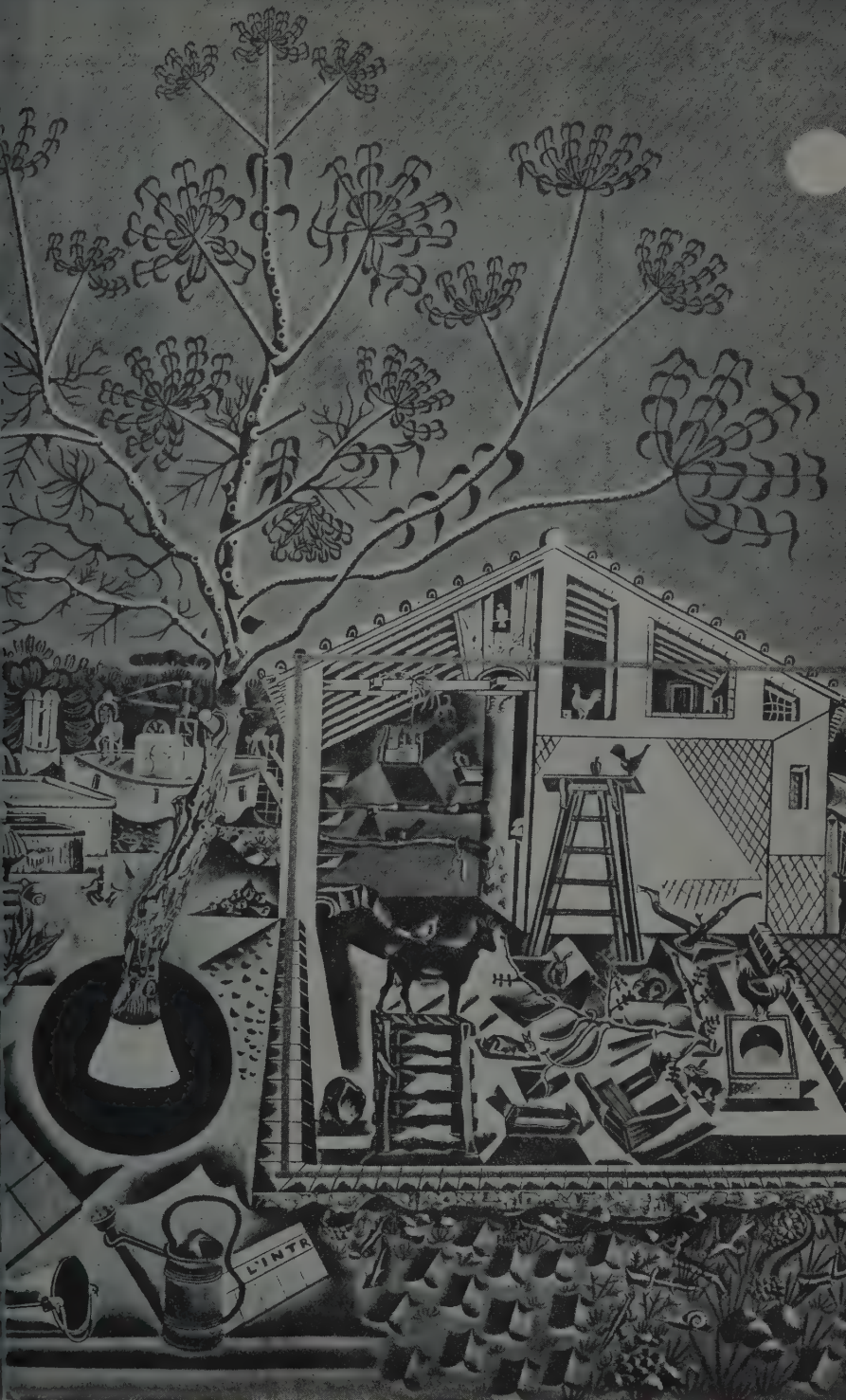
He held his first exhibition in Barcelona in 1918, and came to Paris in 1919, where, befriended by Picasso, he took a room and held a second exhibition. The next few years were spent in more or less acute poverty in Paris, where he occupied the studio of Pablo Gargallo, the Spanish sculptor, adjoining the studio of André Masson. Much of his painting was done suffering the hunger caused by one uncertain meal each day. The apparently light-hearted and gay 'Carneval d'Arlequin' is a composite of hallucinations caused by hunger from details scribbled each night on ends of paper. When not working, Miro was increasingly attracted by the company of the various poets at that time in Paris; having, already in 1923, the conviction that he must go beyond the plastic element in painting in order to reach pure poetry, thus aiming at suggestion rather than description. 'Poetry plastically expressed speaks its own language.' Until this year his work had been chiefly representational, portraits, landscapes and still-lives. In 1924 his friendship with Paul Eluard, Max Ernst and Arp, among the most creative members of the Surrealist movement, was to have a deep and lasting effect on his work. Now, with his developing interest in the raw materials of art, he tried to discover the religious essence of life in the meaning of objects. In order to do this he was more and more attracted by the simplest forms of life. In his pictures people became just *personnages*, interest in animals and trees became interest in

molluscs, dragon-flies, water plants, blades of grass. Gradually the objects detach themselves from their background until they often seem to be floating in an aquarium of space. These pictures, which appear so gay and childlike, represent a prodigious effort by this poet-painter to re-invest some meaning into contemporary life by a direct appeal to the emotions and experiences common to every human being. The rejection of all inessentials demanded a passionate fervour if it was to become creative.

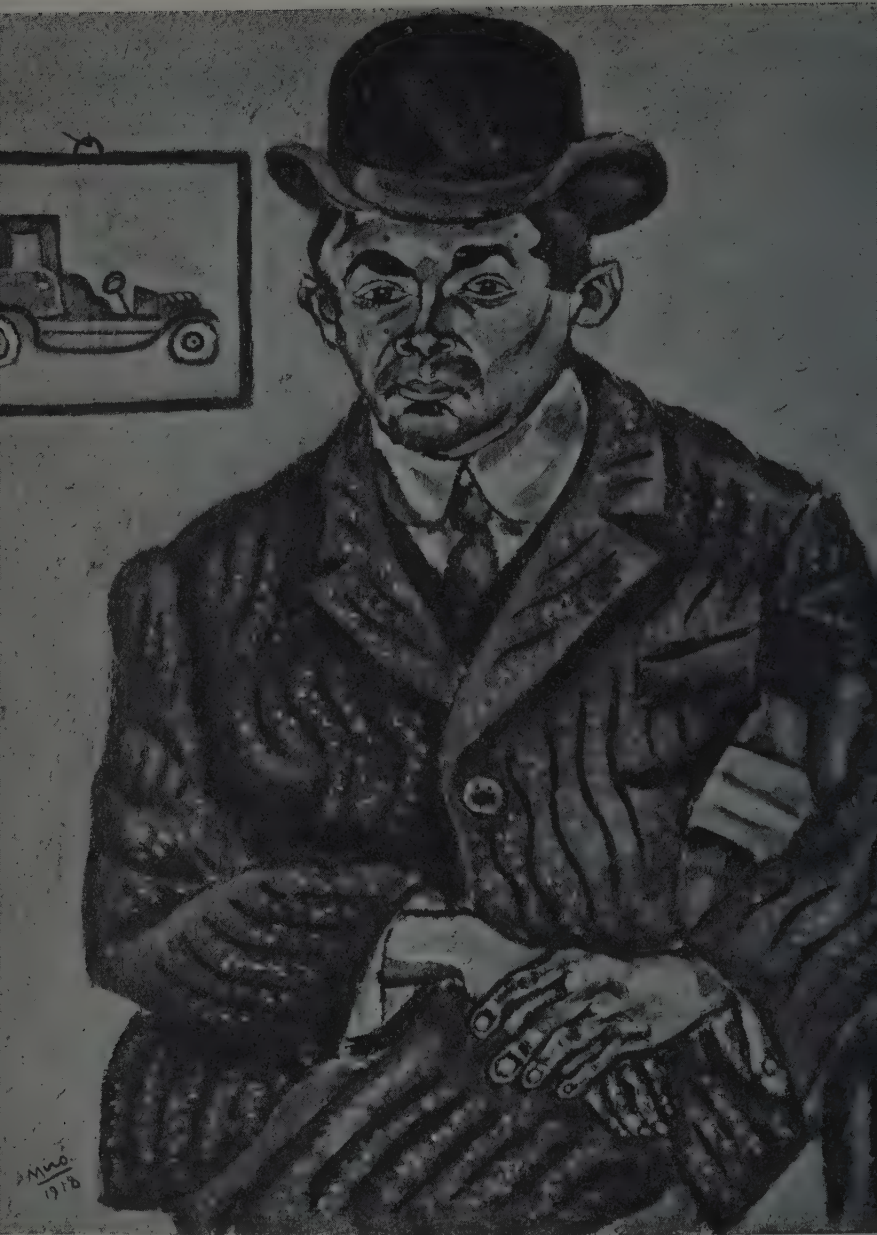
In his own words, 'Courage consists in remaining in one's home, next to nature, which takes no account of our disasters. Each speck of dust contains its own marvellous soul. But, in order to understand it, it is necessary to rediscover the religious and magical element of things, the element expressed by primitive peoples. But one must keep enough purity to be stirred. Lose contact with the people and you are lost. The worst that can possibly happen is for the artist to place himself above the people, to flatter them by giving them shameful clichés. The present official milieux, bastard products of politics, and of the arts, which profess to regenerate the world, are going to poison our last sources of refreshment. While they speak of nobility and tradition, or, on the contrary, of revolution and a proletarian paradise, we can see how their stomachs swell with self-importance and how the fat soaks into their spirit. If only they would not ask us to lower the artist to the level of a society which has such a desperate need of the artist to rediscover its lost dignity. It is equally important not to worry about either criticism or self-criticism. The less we look for success the better we succeed: I mean the greater chance we have of an honest success. A picture, after all, comes from a surplus of emotions and sensations. It is only a process of birth to which one can never return.'

As the present disaster was preparing itself during the 'thirties, Miro was protesting with all the weapons at his command. In 1937 he was commissioned by the Republican Government of Spain to paint a large panel, 'The Reaper', for the Spanish Pavilion in the Paris Exhibition. This panel, showing a Catalan peasant in revolt, comprised, with the Mercury Fountain by Alexander Calder and Picasso's 'Guernica', the interior decoration of the Pavilion. He also designed a poster for display in France, 'Help Spain', under which he wrote, 'In the present struggle I see, on the Fascist side, spent forces; on the opposite side, the people, whose





THE FARM (DETAIL) by Joan Miro (Hemingway Collection)



MAN WITH A DERBY, about 1918, by Joan Miro



THE FARM'S KITCHEN, about 1920, by Joan Miro





boundless creative will give Spain an impetus which will astonish the world.'

In contemporary painting Miro resembles Klee, although by nature he is far less complicated than the German. His work is more homogeneous and does not cover nearly such a diversity of interests, subjects and techniques. For this reason it is purer and more forceful. This direct and simple purity is, as yet, generally unappreciated in England, which has, unfortunately, seen so little of his best work. There is also a streak of anarchism, a will to resist not only whatever form of society tries to impose its standards on him but also all intellectuals who try to compress his work into the limitations of theory.

The last news received directly from a friend of his, Louis Fernandez, a Spanish painter still in Paris, was that he was leaving France last April for the home of his wife's parents in the Balearic Islands.

GEORGE ORWELL

## WELLS, HITLER AND THE WORLD STATE

'IN March or April, say the wiseacres, there is to be a stupendous knockout blow at Britain. . . . What Hitler has to do it with, I cannot imagine. His ebbing and dispersed military resources are now probably not so very much greater than the Italians' before they were put to the test in Greece and Africa.'

'The German air power has been largely spent. It is behind the times and its first-rate men are mostly dead or disheartened or worn out.'

'In 1914 the Hohenzollern army was the best in the world. Behind that screaming little defective in Berlin there is nothing of the sort. . . . Yet our military "experts" discuss the waiting Phantom. In their imaginations it is perfect in its equipment and invincible in discipline. Sometimes it is to strike a decisive 'blow' through Spain and North Africa and on, or march through the Balkans, march from the Danube to Ankara, to Persia, to

India, or "crush Russia", or "pour over the Brenner into Italy". The weeks pass and the phantom does none of these things—for one excellent reason. It does not exist to that extent. Most of such inadequate guns and munitions as it possessed must have been taken from it and fooled away in Hitler's silly feints to invade Britain. And its raw jerrybuilt discipline is wilting under the creeping realization that the Blitzkrieg is spent, and the war is coming home to roost.'

These quotations are not taken from the *Cavalry Quarterly* but from a series of newspaper articles by Mr. H. G. Wells, written at the beginning of this year and now reprinted in a book entitled *Guide to the New World*. Since they were written the German army has overrun the Balkans and reconquered Cyrenaica, it can march through Turkey or Spain at such time as may suit it, and it has undertaken the invasion of Russia. How that campaign will turn out I do not know, but it is worth noticing that the German general staff, whose opinion is probably worth something, would not have begun it if they had not felt fairly certain of finishing it within three months. So much for the idea that the German army is a bogey, its equipment inadequate, its morale breaking down etc., etc.

What has Wells to set against the 'screaming little defectives in Berlin'? The usual rigmarole about a World State, plus the Sankey Declaration, which is an attempted definition of fundamental human rights, of anti-totalitarian tendency. Except that he is now especially concerned with federal world control of air power, it is the same gospel as he has been preaching almost without interruption for the past forty years, always with an air of angry surprise at the human beings who can fail to grasp anything so obvious.

What is the use of saying that we need federal world control of the air? The whole question is how we are to get it. What is the use of pointing out that a World State is desirable? What matter is that not one of the five great military powers would think of submitting to such a thing. All sensible men for decades past have been substantially in agreement with what Mr. Wells says; but then sensible men have no power and, in too many cases, no disposition to sacrifice themselves. Hitler is a criminal lunatic, and Hitler has an army of millions of men, aeroplanes in thousands, tanks in tens of thousands. For his sake a great nation has been

willing to overwork itself for six years and then to fight for two years more, whereas for the commonsense, essentially hedonistic world-view that Mr. Wells puts forward hardly a human creature is willing to shed a pint of blood. Before you can even talk of world reconstruction, or even of peace, you have got to eliminate Hitler, which means bringing into being a dynamic not necessarily the same as that of the Nazis, but probably quite as unacceptable to 'enlightened' and hedonistic people. What has kept England on its feet during the past year? Partly, no doubt, some vague idea about a better future, but chiefly the atavistic emotion of patriotism, the ingrained feeling of the English-speaking peoples that they are superior to foreigners. For the last twenty years the main object of English leftwing intellectuals has been to break this feeling down, and if they had succeeded we might be watching the SS-men patrolling the London streets at this moment. Similarly, why are the Russians fighting like tigers against the German invasion? In part, perhaps, for some half-remembered ideal of Utopian Socialism, but chiefly in defence of the Holy Russia (the 'sacred soil of the Fatherland,' etc., etc.), which Stalin has revived in an only slightly altered form. The energy that actually shapes the world springs from emotions—racial pride, leader-worship, religious belief, love of war—which liberal intellectuals mechanically write off as anachronisms, and which they have usually destroyed so completely in themselves as to have lost all power of action.

The people who say that Hitler is Antichrist or, alternatively, the Holy Ghost are nearer an understanding of the truth than the leftwing intellectuals who for ten dreadful years have kept it up that he is merely a figure out of comic opera, not worth taking seriously. All that this idea really reflects is the sheltered conditions of English life. The Left Book Club was at bottom a product of Scotland Yard, just as the Peace Pledge Union is a product of the navy. One development of the last ten years has been the appearance of the 'political book', a sort of enlarged pamphlet combining history with political criticism, as an important literary form. But the best writers in this line—Trotsky, Rauschnig, Rosenberg, Silone, Borkenau, Koestler and others—have none of them been Englishmen, and nearly all of them have been renegades from one or other extremist party, who have seen totalitarianism at close quarters and known the meaning of exile and

persecution. Only in the English-speaking countries was it fashionable to believe, right up to the outbreak of war, that Hitler was an unimportant lunatic and the German tanks made of cardboard. Mr. Wells, it will be seen from the quotations I have given above, believes something of the kind still. I do not suppose that either the bombs or the German campaign in Greece have altered his opinion. A life-long habit of thought stands between him and an understanding of Hitler's power.

Mr. Wells, like Dickens, belongs to the non-military middle class. The thunder of guns, the jingle of spurs, the catch in the throat when the old flag goes by, leave him manifestly cold. He has an invincible hatred of the fighting, hunting, swashbuckling side of life, symbolised in all his early books by a violent propaganda against horses. The principal villain of his *Outline of History* is the romantic military adventurer, Napoleon. If one looks through nearly any book that he has written in the last forty years one finds the same idea constantly recurring: the supposed antithesis between the man of science who is working towards a planned World State and the reactionary who is trying to restore a disorderly past. In novels, Utopias, essays, films, pamphlets the antithesis crops up, always more or less the same. On the one side science, order, progress, internationalism, aeroplanes, steel, concrete, hygiene: on the other side war, nationalism, religion, monarchy, peasants, Greek professors, poets, horses. History as he sees it is a series of victories won by the scientific man over the romantic man. Now, he is probably right in assuming that a 'reasonable', planned form of society, with scientists rather than witch-doctors in control, will prevail sooner or later, but that is a different matter from assuming that it is just round the corner. There survives somewhere or other an interesting controversy which took place between Wells and Churchill at the time of the Russian Revolution. Wells accuses Churchill of not really believing his own propaganda about the Bolsheviks being monsters dripping with blood, etc., but of merely fearing that they were going to introduce an era of commonsense and scientific control, in which flag-wavers like Churchill himself would have no place. Churchill's estimate of the Bolsheviks, however, was nearer the mark than Wells's. The early Bolsheviks may have been angels or demons, according as one chooses to regard them, but at any rate they were not sensible men. They were not introducing a



Wellsian Utopia but a Rule of the Saints, which, like the English Rule of the Saints, was a military despotism enlivened by witchcraft trials. The same misconception reappears in an inverted form in Wells's attitude to the Nazis. Hitler is all the war-lords and witch-doctors in history rolled into one. Therefore, argues Wells, he is an absurdity, a ghost from the past, a creature doomed to disappear almost immediately. But unfortunately the equation of science with common sense does not really hold good. The aeroplane, which was looked forward to as a civilizing influence but in practice has hardly been used except for dropping bombs, is the symbol of that fact. Modern Germany is far more scientific than England, and far more barbarous. Much of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. The order, the planning, the State encouragement of science, the steel, the concrete, the aeroplanes, are all there, but all in the service of ideas appropriate to the Stone Age. Science is fighting on the side of superstition. But obviously it is impossible for Wells to accept this. It would contradict the world-view on which his own works are based. The war-lords and the witch-doctors *must* fail, the commonsense World State, as seen by a nineteenth-century liberal whose heart does not leap at the sound of bugles, *must* triumph. Treachery and defeatism apart, Hitler *cannot* be a real danger. That he should finally win would be an impossible reversal of history, like a Jacobite restoration.

But is it not a sort of parricide for a person of my age (38) to find fault with H. G. Wells? Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells's own creation. How much influence any mere writer has, and especially a 'popular' writer whose work takes effect quickly, is questionable, but I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at any rate in the English language, influenced the young so much. The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed. Only, just the singleness of mind, the one-sided imagination that made him seem like an inspired prophet in the Edwardian age, make him a shallow inadequate thinker now. When Wells was young the antithesis between science and reaction was not false. Society was ruled by narrow-minded, profoundly incurious people, predatory business-men, dull squires, bishops, politicians who could quote Horace but had

never heard of algebra. Science was faintly disreputable and religious belief obligatory. Traditionalism, stupidity, snobbishness, patriotism, superstition and love of war seemed to be all on the same side; there was need of someone who could state the opposite point of view. Back in the nineteen-hundreds it was a wonderful experience for a boy to discover H. G. Wells. There you were, in a world of pedants, clergyman and golfers, with your future employers exhorting you to 'get on or get out', your parents systematically warping your sexual life, and your dull-witted schoolmasters sniggering over their Latin tags; and here was this wonderful man who could tell you about the inhabitants of the planets and the bottom of the sea, and who *knew* that the future was not going to be what respectable people imagined. A decade or so before aeroplanes were technically feasible Wells knew that within a little while men would be able to fly. He knew that because he himself *wanted* to be able to fly, and therefore felt sure that research in that direction would continue. On the other hand, even when I was a little boy, at a time when the Wright brothers had actually lifted their machine off the ground for fifty-nine seconds, the generally-accepted opinion was that if God had meant us to fly He would have given us wings. Up to 1914 Wells was in the main a true prophet. In physical details his vision of the new world has been fulfilled to a surprising extent.

But because he belonged to the nineteenth century and to a non-military nation and class, he could not grasp the tremendous strength of the old world which was symbolized in his mind by ignorant fox-hunting Tories. He was and still is quite incapable of understanding that nationalism, religious bigotry and feudal loyalty are far more powerful forces than what he himself would describe as sanity. Creatures out of the Dark Ages have come marching into the present, and if they are ghosts they are at any rate ghosts which need a strong magic to lay them. The people who have shown the best understanding of Fascism are either those who have suffered under it, or those who have a Fascist streak in themselves. A crude book like *The Iron Heel*, written nearly thirty years ago, is a truer prophecy of the future than either *Brave New World* or *The Shape of Things to Come*. If one had to choose among Wells's own contemporaries a writer who could stand towards him as a corrective, one might choose

Kipling, who was not deaf to the evil voices of power and military 'glory'. Kipling would have understood the appeal of Hitler or for that matter of Stalin, whatever his attitude towards them might be. Wells is too sane to understand the modern world. The succession of lower-middle-class novels which are his greatest achievement stopped short at the other war and never really began again, and since 1920 he has squandered his talents in slaying paper dragons. But how much it is, after all, to have any talents to squander.

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## SELECTED NOTICES

*New Year Letter.* By W. H. Auden. Faber, 10s. 6d.

AT the beginning of this book Mr. Auden sets a quotation from Montaigne:

'We are, I know not how, double in ourselves, so that what we believe we disbelieve, and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn.'

The long 'Letter' in verse that follows is an illustration of this thesis, a protracted commentary on ambivalence. As a moralist, a man concerned with what should be rather than with what is, Mr. Auden tries every now and then to get away from it; but it always drags him back again into a region where he sees affirmation as an aspect of negation, the Devil as an agent of progress, art as a compensation for practical incompetence, necessity as free, and freedom as necessity. The moralist tries repeatedly to cut this complicated knot, for it has to be cut before a moral act is possible; but the ends join as soon as they are parted, tying him up as before. For the first three-quarters of the poem this happens with almost monotonous regularity:

To set in order—that's the task  
Both Eros and Apollo ask . . .  
That order which must be the end  
That all self-loving things intend  
Who struggle for their liberty,  
Who use, that is, their will to be.

Though order never can be willed  
 But is the state of the fulfilled,  
 For will but wills its opposite  
 And not the whole in which they fit. . . .

The Devil is treated in the same way (Mr. Auden says many good things about him):

Poor cheated *Mephistopheles*  
 Who think you're doing as you please  
 In telling us, by doing ill  
 To prove that we possess free-will . . .  
 But so much more effective, though,  
 Than our well-meaning, stupid friends  
 In driving us towards good ends. . . .

The metaphysical see-saw goes on:

To sin is to act consciously  
 Against what seems necessity,  
 A possibility cut out  
 In any world that excludes doubt. . . .

we're free to will  
 Ourselves to Purgatory still,  
 Consenting parties to our lives  
 To love them like attractive wives  
 Whom we adore but do not trust;  
 We cannot live without their lust,  
 And need their stratagems to win  
 Truth out of Time. In Time we sin. . . .

Is it not here that we belong  
 Where everyone is doing wrong?

The only subject treated as an exception to the rule is Russia:

We hoped; we waited for the day  
 The state would wither clean away,  
 Expecting the Millennium  
 That theory promised us would come:  
 It didn't. Specialists must try  
 To detail all the reasons why. . . .

But the reasons why are explained by the law of ambivalence, if it works as Mr. Auden makes it work. If the Devil is a moral force there can be no Millennium.



This tug-of-war between the moral instinct and a recognition of the relativity of goodness goes on through the first two books of the letter, producing a deadlock. It is dispersed at the beginning of the third book by the realization of a moment of harmony, in which

An accidental happiness,  
Catching man off his guard, will blow him  
Out of his life in time to show him  
The field of Being where he may  
Unconscious of Becoming, play  
With the Eternal Innocence,  
Of unimpeded utterance.

It is a momentary relief; ambivalence returns, though with an altered note:

But perfect Being has ordained  
It must be lost to be regained  
And in its orchards grows the tree  
And fruit of human destiny,  
And men must eat it and depart  
At once with gay and grateful heart,  
Obedient, reborn, re-aware. . . .

Yet after this, which is the crucial experience described in the 'Letter', Mr. Auden returns to his game with opposites, as if the field of Being were only an incident, of no more intrinsic importance than the progressive tendencies of the Devil, or the practical incompetence of artists. This gives a deep inconclusiveness to the poem, which seems to be making, with a great deal of excellent argument, towards something which is never reached, or is caught in passing and lost again. The notes at the end show from what miscellaneous sources the ideas of the poem were drawn: Pascal, Flaubert, Nietzsche, Wagner, Kierkegaard, Kafka, contemporary psychologists and anthropologists, newspaper statistics, and the guesses of science. The poem shows, at least, that nothing solid can be made out of the modern ideas we have tried to live upon for so long. Mr. Auden admits this himself in one of his numerous parenthesis, yet still goes on trying to shape a philosophy out of Freud and Marx, with Kierkegaard and Kafka as auxiliaries.

The 'Letter', which forms the main section of the book, is probably to be taken as a reaction against Mr. Auden's earlier,

clearcut, reformist view of life, a recognition that experience is more complex and equivocal than he had taken it to be and, among other things, that

Art is not life and cannot be  
A midwife to society.

He is convincing when he expresses doubt, unconvincing when he tries to find an answer to doubt, for the doubt comes from a deeper source than the answer. No answer can be found on the plane of ambivalence, and in the end he has to fall back on faith:

O every day in sleep and labour  
Our life and death are with our neighbour  
And love illuminates again  
The city and the lion's den,  
The world's great rage, the travel of young men.

The poem contains some very good argument, a great number of ideas taken from modern science and literature, some excellent observations on the present state of the world, and underneath, a deep dissatisfaction with all these things, a dissatisfaction, probably, with the poem itself. The verse measure is skilfully used, the transitions are easy and natural, the argument has the sanction of the best that has been thought and said for the last forty years; but underneath all this one is conscious of a demon of dissatisfied doubt which swallows each idea as it is uttered, and devours at last, except for a few passages actually expressing doubt, or its complement faith, the whole poem.

After the 'Letter' comes a short section mainly in sonnet form called 'The Quest', incomparably the best part of the book. It contains some of the best poetry that Mr. Auden has ever written. The difference in quality between this section and the 'Letter' can be shown in almost any line, quoted at random:

The friends who met here and embraced are gone,  
Each to his own mistake. . . .

In theory they were sound on Expectation  
Had there been situations to be in;  
Unluckily they were their situation. . . .

The demon of ambivalence intrudes into the latter part of this section too, making the imagery too easy; but the best poems have a clarity and depth which Mr. Auden has seldom excelled, a

fusion of the ordinary and the mythological which is as natural to him as it was to Kafka, and a new perfection of form. They show that, in spite of the inconclusive mental turmoil revealed in the 'Letter', his gifts as a poet are as great as ever, if not greater.

EDWIN MUIR

*War into Europe: Attack in Depth.* By Hugh Slater (Gollancz 5s.). Not long ago a book such as this was regarded as, at best provocative, at worst idle fantasy. But now realities have come so close to us, events have marched so fast upon the heels of possibility, that the actuality of the book is patent to everyone. It is a book that every soldier should read and indeed everyone interested in soldiering: and if much of the matter will be accepted by everyone there is still a good deal left over which is controversial.

Mr. Slater, who needs no introduction here, takes as his theme the strategy and tactics imposed by the development of the air arm and the tank, his main point being that our classic conception of depth (the principle of attack in depth was thoroughly applied by Napoleon) needs drastic revision. The tank, of course, has restored the possibility of breaking an enemy's front by means of a strong concentration of great strength; but air-borne troops—being able, like the angel of the medievalists, to go from one point to another without passing through the intervening space (as far as ground is concerned)—have made the idea of any 'front' unfruitful. The front is everywhere, even at the very heart of the country to be invaded. The question thus is, how far do these developments alter the principles of war in attack and defence?

The basic principles are probably not much altered. War is a battle of wits, of pitting cunning against cunning, of understanding the way your opponent's mind works. This entails the principles of morale, surprise originality of method, of hitting hard where hitting will have the most effect. Again, an army must be fed and supplied. This brings in the old necessities of organisation. But, of course, as is always well rubbed in whenever the subject is taught, though the rules of war are neither very numerous nor very abstruse, their application is difficult, and always changing. What used to be rubbed in with pardonable exaggeration, was some such phrase as 'in war, the unexpected always happens', together with the old Jacksonian maxim 'mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy'.

How to do this, how to be ready for the enemy's guile, then, are Mr. Slater's problems. We already know a good deal about the enemy's methods, and we are learning more every day; Mr. Slater applies the lessons brilliantly. He is an admirable expositor, helps the reader with excellent plans, and thus makes clear his ingenious scheme for Home Defence, a subject which must at the moment be uppermost in our minds. His 'total defence' is based not on a front line, but on a system of strong points everywhere, with mobile forces free to mop up and attack. This is no doubt orthodox doctrine now, but it is as well for everybody to know it. His scheme for attack, when the time comes, is deep penetration regardless of communications—as the Germans practised it in France—aided by air-borne troops and fifth columnists. What he insists upon, however, is that victory can be obtained only if each man is enthusiastic for the thing he fights for, imbued with the sense that if he does not win, he will certainly die to all that matters to him in life.

Mr. Slater's book is stirring and encouraging, but here and there a word or two of warning may be necessary. One is reminded of the remark by that most brilliant of our military critics, Henderson: 'Military criticism takes a long time to recover its equilibrium. The practical effects of a new explosive, an improved fire-arm, a novel formation, no matter what the circumstances, are sufficient to drive it to extremes.' On two points Mr. Slater seems to have gone too far. He suggests, for instance, that the artillery can be dispensed with, because the tank and the bomber can between them do its job. That time may come, but it is certainly not here yet. For bombing is far from having the accuracy of artillery; it cannot for various obvious reasons be depended upon to act at a precise moment with any given volume of fire, and it cannot well sustain fire day and night as artillery can.

The other point on which he seems to err on the side of excess is on the question of the infantry, which he would like to see abolished except for parachute troops. His ideal army consists almost entirely of tanks and aeroplanes, with scientific research sections. But the infantry, with all due respect to Mr. Slater, is still the only arm that can hold ground as at least one episode in this war will help to argue.

There are one or two other small bones one would like to pick



with Mr. Slater in this book, which is vividly imagined, yet based on experience, the writings of previous advanced military critics, and the lessons of this war. It is so well explained, so exciting in its suggestions for our final attacks that besides being salutary, it is invigorating and should have a wide circulation. His chapter on the psychology of fear and courage is alone well worth studying, and should cause even the unaware to think more clearly.

BONAMY DOBRÉE

*The Father Found.* Poems by Charles Madge. Faber & Faber. 6s.  
*Death at Sea.* Poems by Frederick Prokosch. Chatto & Windus. 6s.  
*Song and Idea.* Poems by Richard Eberhart. Chatto & Windus. 6s.  
*Blind Men's Flowers are Green.* Poems by Rayner Heppenstall, Secker & Warburg. 5s.

These poets, seeming to have nothing in common but their youth and a leaning towards obscurity, are here listed in what appears to me their order of present achievement, without regard to past performance, and will be discussed independently of each other.

The important thing about Charles Madge's work is that it seems to attempt to drag or coax into the light of poetry new things from the region of the hitherto-unexpressed. 'What oft was thought' is no concern of his. Allegory is the net with which he fishes up his often unintelligible imaginings; after several readings I can find no clue as to what is intended by such symbols as *The Electric Ghost* or *The Margarine*; the former appears in the entirely obscure playlet or charade which gives its name to the book and which seems made of fairy-tale material in that it is about a traveller who wins the hand of the Princess from the King her father, after combat with *The Electric Ghost*, an entity whose nature, meaning or relevance is never disclosed. The dialogue also maintains a high level of *non-sequitur*. *The Margarine* symbol has a poem all to itself, one so utterly bewildering that I can offer no account of it; nor can anyone else I have shown it to. Madge's allegorical manner scores a grateful success, however, in a poem of real beauty and meaning called *Who lives in the Castle*, which recalls the work of Mr. De La Mare at its best, and can be interpreted (though I do not say this was what the author intended), as an account of the nature of Poetry itself:

Yet, often, under high sun she would take  
 Her old carved chair and watch the grass that blood  
 Nurtured; her nature was the same enigma  
 As those of algebraic symbols, dance  
 For the abstract and lofty brain; her nature  
 Was like the order of a field of grass  
 Or eddies of a river in full flood.

Next, among poetic virtues, to his attempt in creative allegory  
 Madge can claim a sharp observation and a faculty for phrase to  
 match:

. . . There also was a fly  
 Busy at fly's devices on the pane. . . .

or

And peacock's tail that opens like a storm.

Such happy discoveries occur in almost every poem, side by  
 side, unfortunately, with hideous and unintelligible expressions  
 like

The limper, could he climb  
 Down backstairs aboriginal incision?

The faults of Browning cannot make the virtues of Madge.

Frederick Prokosch is a poet whose verses have always charmed  
 me by the shapely good manners of their sentiment; he is also  
 uniformly fortunate in his picture-building and rhythms:

Black-eyed Ulysses, being an astute and eagle-hearted man,  
 A heavily loined, lumbering man with a bird's eye and a bird's  
 unrest,

As he listened and heard through the lapping of the waves  
 That loud, heart-breaking music, understood. Sweat poured  
 from his brown chest.

Unfortunately what Ulysses understood was so utterly banal that  
 it hardly deserves the Dowsonian line:

Flesh fanned easily into fire, and a heart as hard as a stone.  
 Readers of Kafka (and Prokosch in another poem alludes to him)  
 will remember there is more to be said about Ulysses than that.  
 The style of Prokosch always suggests that of Heredia to me and  
 leads me to wonder whether it is inescapable that the marmorean  
 and sculptured qualities of a line like

La gigantesque horreur de l'ombre Herculéenne  
 must express or embody insipid notions such as that; and then  
 remember Milton whose line is marble, and his thought not brick



Milton to whom a Heredia is as Canova to Michael Angelo; the inferior marble, as the inferior verse, seems to have no life inside it; it is shaped from without, not, like a fountain, from its inner thrust. Nevertheless it gives pleasure; if you have no inhibitions against simple sentiment and classic phrase (as I have not), Prokosch can charm you; his worst fault is one common among actors, a tendency to listen to himself and to his own suave voice; I could wish he had less sentiment and more passion.

Richard Eberhart seems not as yet quite certain of his style; he varies in the first part of his book from a Matthew Arnoldish Sonnet-style, as in the poem *Burden*, through Blake-like lyric and epigram, to a short chain of platitudes dedicated to and in the manner of Mr. Auden in gnomic mood. But even among these poems there are hints of better things to come, and in part two of the book they burst forth in several poems, notably in *Orchard: The Virgin*: and *A Meditation*; the last of these is a very ambitious soliloquy by a skull, as if to some Hamlet that holds it in his hand, an excellent and novel setting for an oracular poem; true, the language and vision of Hamlet's father, the Ghost, though recalled, are not here equalled; but there is some language and some vision. I am also grateful to Eberhart for one magnificent line in the poem about Irving Babbitt:

Warbling your native foot-notes mild.

Rayner Heppenstall uses astrological imagery as if he were an astrologer, and Christian imagery, but not as if he were a Christian; so at least it seems to me; but I must confess his style is often so very paradoxical and obscure that it is hard to know whose side he is on; metaphysical writers are necessarily difficult, having such difficult things to speak of. 'To write on their plan,' said Dr. Johnson of the followers of Donne, 'it was at least necessary to read and think'; and this is no doubt true also of Mr. Heppenstall; I can sometimes follow his reading, but seldom his thinking.

The poem *Homage to Leon Bloy* calls *Piers Plowman* to mind, especially in the passage on the trial of Jesus, but I can understand Langland more easily than Heppenstall. For his astrology, I pass it by, an incompetent reader. Of all his poems here printed *The Lament of the Young Men* is the most beautiful; it has a freeness of movement and an uncrabbedness which are welcome after the more puzzling poems.

NEVILL COGHILL

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